



Representations of Sino-African development cooperation: Discourse theoretical approach to American and British broadsheet newspapers

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Dorottya Bognár

*Master's Thesis in Peace and Conflict Transformation
Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education
University of Tromsø
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Abstract

With the growing influence of the People's Republic of China in Africa, the question arises: how do the advanced industrialised countries with established interests on the continent see the evolving Sino-African economic and foreign aid relations. This thesis aims at revealing the discourses present in American and British broadsheet newspapers on the topic and analysing the relationship between these discourses. The selection of newspapers includes *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*. Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory is used as the theory and method for the analysis, accompanied by imported concepts from international relations theory.

Through the qualitative analysis of the meanings ascribed to six signs – “Sino-African development cooperation”, “China”, “Africa”, “the West”, “good governance” and “non-interference” – five discourses emerge in the material: three based on international relations theory – liberal internationalist, political realist and world system discourses – and two that I termed economic development and reluctant cooperation discourses. Further analysis reveals struggle and antagonism on levels of signs, discourses and clusters of discourses, while objectivity, the naturalisation of meaning only exists in the case of one sign in the material. The pervasive struggles show that the topic is characterised by being politically contested, with each discourse leading to different appropriate course of action.

Keywords: discourse theory, mass media, China, Africa, development cooperation

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1. Introduction

1.1. Choice of topic

The international realm has changed in the recent years from the one that was characterised by the supremacy of the United States of America after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. This became apparent as a consequence of the prolonged wars waged in Afghanistan and Iraq, and of the 2008 financial crisis. While the United States, along with its ally, the European Union, has been preoccupied with its war efforts and damaged economic performance and related domestic issues, it became clear that the already – especially economically - rapidly rising People's Republic of China (hereafter referred to as China or PRC) has ended up as the beneficiary of the financial crisis (Campbell, 2007, 92; Halper, 2010, 33-36; James, 2011, 530-531). Whereas the United States and the European Union needed to concentrate on their domestic affairs relative to their wider international relations, the PRC avoided the lengthy and deep consequences of the financial crisis and thus managed to enhance its international position (Lampton, 2009, 704-705). China, in its international relations, has left its historic comfort zone that was limited to its neighbouring region and set a firm foot on continents that used to be the zones of influence of the Western powers, such as Africa or Latin-America (Lanteigne, 2009, 132-133).

China's economic and financial power is paired not only with efforts to modernise its military but also with its increasingly growing soft power (Halper, 2010, 9-11). Here I refer to not just its efforts to spread and popularise its culture via the Confucius Institutes, the increasingly known and praised Chinese film industry or the 2008 Olympic Games, but to its growing participation in international organisations, such as the United Nations or the World Trade Organisation, and its economic model that gained popularity among many third world leaders. This economic model that combines authoritarian governance with fast economic development and decreasing poverty is accompanied by China's attitude to international relations characterised by the principle of non-interference when making trade and investment deals. It can be said that first and foremost China's economic and financial power and soft power (not so much its military that is still lagging behind America) led many to believe that China is the most possible challenger of the US-led unipolar world order and that China should take its place beside the United States in what they term the Group of Two (G-2)

cooperating special relationship (Bergsten, 2008; Bergsten, 2009; Brzezinski, 2009, 56; Ferguson, 2009).

With the rise of China and the halt of the United States, the question arises: is the special relationship of the two great powers going to be a co-operative one, as indeed it is proposed by the supporters of the G-2 concept, or competitive. There are several issues that strain the relationship between the United States and China. These issues can be categorized as economic, political and ideological strains. For its economic downturn the United States partly blames China because of the PRC's insufficient enforcement of intellectual property rights, industrial espionage and because of the artificially low exchange rate of the Chinese currency (Broomfield, 2010, 273; Etzioni, 2011, 545). In the political sphere we can mention the issues of Tibet, in connection to which meetings with the Dalai Lama cause strains, and Taiwan, whose security the United States guarantees by law. Meanwhile the status of human rights within the PRC and in its relationships to its partners, as well as China's authoritative governance, is a recurring critique heard from both the US and the European Union.

These strains are possibly aggravated by the media reporting of the relationship between the United States, the European Union and China. Deborah Brautigam notes the different myths existing in the American and European media about China's conduct towards Africa (2009, 273-306), while Emma Mawdsley shows a negative stereotyping of China taking place in the British media that she associates with the construction of a new international relations adversary (2008, 522-524). These researches show the danger the media poses as it emphasises the adversary relations between China and the established great powers rather than de-emphasises them. Therefore, the study of the media side, as opposed to what is happening on the ground, is important as it can enlighten how the relationship between China and the developed world is perceived, as a superficial and potentially biased media reporting could threaten the fragile peaceful relations between these two poles in the world order.

This Master's thesis is aimed at the analysis of the media portrayal of China's presence in Africa. The importance of this very topic comes from, on the one hand, the increasing importance of Africa in the Chinese foreign policy and, on the other hand, the interplay of the political, economic and ideological strains between China and the advanced industrialised countries in Africa. This issue is elaborated on below. For now, it is enough to say that these tensions make Africa a possible hotspot between the United States and the European Union

(especially the United Kingdom that is the European power focused upon in this paper) on the one hand, and China, on the other.

The media's portrayal of the Sino-African relations, as spelled out in the literature review, is not a well-researched topic. While Deborah Brautigam (2009) explains the misunderstandings and misrepresentations widely held in the media about China's conduct in Africa, hers is not a systematic review of the media coverage of the issue but rather she focuses on the frequently appearing misconceptions. Emma Mawdsley (2008) in her research on discursive patterns concentrates on the stereotyping of China, Africa and the West in the media that emphasises the negative aspects of China's presence in Africa as opposed to the positive West. This thesis's approach is new to the topic compared to Brautigam's and Mawdsley's findings in two aspects. While Brautigam elaborates on the differences between the media's view on the Sino-African relations and the reality on the ground, the present research is not concerned with the relation between media portrayal and its subject. Rather it holds that the way the media portrays foreign affairs is constitutive of reality as it leads to actions that are appropriate to the media portrayal, not necessarily to the happenings themselves. This would be further explained later on. The myths on China's conduct in Africa that Brautigam focuses on are part of the stereotyping found by Mawdsley. What differentiates my approach from Mawdsley's is that I am interested in not just the dominant views but all the discursive patterns found in the media on the Sino-African relations. The present paper's focus is, therefore, not on the overwhelming meanings ascribed by the media, but on the relations between the different meanings, whether there is one dominant or many equals struggling for dominance.

1.2. Problem statement and research questions

For the future Sino-American relationship and for the future of Africa, it is important to look at how the mainly economic Sino-African relationship is portrayed in the media. The media is a place where competing views are potentially represented, and are not just represented, but also struggle to ascribe a hegemonic meaning to the reality on the ground. All depictions of these topics, all these ascriptions of meaning to reality align with other depictions and as a consequence create discourses that reinforce or change the perceptions of the audience. Preliminarily discourses can be described as patterns of meaning within a topic. Looking at

these discourses we can determine what understandings are formed in the media on this particular topic and transmitted to the audience.

My research aim is to look at what discourses are there on the topic concerning the consequences of China's relations with Africa in the printed media, in particular in broadsheet newspapers, in a time frame between 2009 and the end of 2011 and to examine the struggle for domination between these discourses. Therefore my research questions are:

- a) What is the focus of the analysed broadsheet newspapers on the topic of Sino-African economic relationship, especially concentrating on the consequences of this relationship? That is, what discourses are there in these media?
- b) Does one discourse dominate the analysed newspapers, or, if there is a struggle, over what meanings do the struggle between discourses unfold?

Here it is important to elaborate more on the two sides of the topic: China in Africa and its depiction in the media.

1.2.1. China in Africa

As Mawdsley notes, "Africa is one place in which China and western nations, notably the US, are likely to find themselves in a position of competition" (2008, 523). Behind this the reason I see in the interplay of the multiple strains influencing the relationship between China, the developed world and the developing world.

In the political realm, China's rise together with the shifting focus of the United States and the European Union due to the financial crisis gave China the opportunity and space to further expand its activity in Africa that has not before been China's main zone of influence. The PRC's main political aim on the continent is its recognition as the only representative of China as opposed to Taiwan, as well as seeking the support of African states for its quest for a multipolar world order (Brautigam, 2009, 67-69; Cheng & Shi, 2009, 95-101; Halper, 2010, 109-113; Lantaigne, 2009, 134; Mawdsley, 2008, 513). China as an emerging power creates a competition on the continent between the established great powers, such as the United States, the United Kingdom and France, and China that is often seen as a newcomer. China, however, has been present in Africa from the Maoist era – it is the substance and scope of the relationship that has changed over time (Lantaigne, 2009, 132-134). Under Mao the basis of

the relationship between China and Africa was ideology. The Maoist China turned to Africa and to the broader Third World for support in its struggle against imperialism, against the United States and later the Soviet Union (Lanteigne, 2009, 133). In this period economic cooperation couldn't come to the fore because of the ruinous economic effects of the Maoist domestic policies. It was after the short break under Deng Xiaoping, when China concentrated on its own economic rebuilding and development that the new period of Chinese presence in Africa started. This new opening towards Africa was brought about by the efforts taken against its international isolation after the events at Tiananmen Square in 1989 on the one hand, and by increasing demand for commodities, raw materials and energy from abroad on the other (Cheng & Shi, 2009, 90-91, 110-111; Lanteigne, 2009, 133). With this opening in the early 1990's China's increasing activity took off on the continent dominated by the United States and the former colonial powers and became apparent to the world only after the 2006 summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (Lanteigne, 2009, 135).

China's change in its relationship from one based on ideology to one based on economics can be explained by its growing demand for export markets and natural resources kindled by its fast economic development. However, China's relations to Africa are not purely based on trade and resource extraction. What characterises the nature of this relationship is the intertwining combination of foreign aid, trade and investment (McKinnon, 2010, 495-496). According to Deborah Brautigam (2009, 10-13, 75-81), China's well-thought-out strategy in its engagement with Africa is based on China's experience as an aid recipient from American, European and Japanese donors. While this Western aid policy moved away from its practice of funding agriculture, manufacturing and infrastructure to social sector programs as a consequence of the UN Millennium Development Goals, the vacuum it left could be filled by the Chinese aid emphasising a mutually beneficial win-win solution combining infrastructure building and production on the one hand and trade of natural resources and Chinese goods on the other (Brautigam, 2009, 77). The combination of aid, trade and investment is best explained by Ronald McKinnon as a project-based quasi-barter deal where Chinese companies, receiving funds directly from China, take on infrastructure, construction and mining projects in Africa where the funds have to be repaid in commodity, especially natural resources, over the course of several years (McKinnon, 2010, 496). Therefore, as Brautigam (2009, 165-179) explains it, even though this kind of economic cooperation is often labelled as "aid" in the media, it does not qualify as foreign aid under the rules of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). A further point here is made by

Mawdsley (2012, 257-258): among Southern actors (a category that include both the African countries and China), the terminology that applies to foreign aid relations between the so-called North and South is regularly rejected. The use of “donor” and “recipient” is replaced by “development partners” as the latter invokes horizontal relations as opposed to the former’s vertical hierarchy. Similarly, the term “development cooperation” is preferred over “foreign aid”. As Mawdsley (2012, 257-258) observes:

[d]ifferent Southern actors define ‘development cooperation’ in different ways, but it includes grants, loans, lines of credit, debt cancellation, studentships and technical training, resource-for-infrastructure swaps, the provisions of doctors, nurses and other skilled professionals, humanitarian relief, and so on. The majority of South-South Development Cooperation (SSDC) flows, in most cases, are effectively commercial in nature, if on preferential terms. However, some elements clearly equate to the ‘international’ definition of Overseas Development Assistance, or foreign aid. Where the line is drawn between ‘aid’, soft financing and other forms of official flows is murky and contested.

Henceforth, I am going to use the term “development cooperation” when referring to the relationship between Africa and China as this is the most comprehensive term that encompasses the different aspects of these economic relations.

This type of quasi-barter relationship is often perceived in the US and Europe as one of increased disadvantage to the development of the African states because of its effect of simultaneously extracting and exporting raw materials and flooding the African market with cheap Chinese products. Moreover, the Chinese form of economic cooperation is also frequently criticised for its secrecy and its perceived consequences. The lack of transparency about the Chinese funds fuels the criticism that Chinese aid makes corruption in the recipient countries worse. Furthermore, it is often cited that, because of the Chinese principle of non-interference into other states’ internal affairs, China ignores the political, social and environmental consequences of its conduct in Africa on the one hand, and, on the other, poses as an alternative to the Western aid system built on the enforcement of liberal values, such as respect for human rights, democracy and liberalisation of economy (Brautigam, 2009, 12-13; Cheng & Shi, 2009, 108, 111). The Chinese alternative can be attractive to African leaders in need of funds who, at the same time, don’t want to adhere to the liberal value system. Together, the lack of transparency, the worsening corruption and the alternative funds without strings attached can cause a setback for the spread of good governance on the continent as a consequence of non-interference into internal affairs.

Therefore, in Africa we can see the interplay of the strains on the relationship between the United States and its allies and China. China is becoming a major player on the continent formerly dominated by the US and the European powers which also shows the growing confidence of the PRC in its international relations outside its previous comfort zone (Lanteigne, 2009, 132-133). China's shift to economic emphasis in its relations to Africa not only poses a competition for the vast natural resources of the continent, but also acts as an alternative for African states in need of financial assistance – an alternative value system.

1.2.2. The study of the media

From the point of view of the growing importance of the relationship between the United States and China, it is important to look at how the media of both the West (US and EU) and China perceive one another. The relationship between two or more states is a special topic in the sense that the audience, the general public, cannot experience it directly themselves; there is always the need for a medium. As Bernard Cohen phrases it, “[f]or most of the foreign policy audience, the really effective political map of the world [...] is drawn by the reporter and the editor” (1963, 12-13). The media's reports on international happenings and other states have a high influence on how the audience perceives these events and international actors.

However, research has shown that it is not only the general public who are influenced by the media's foreign policy reporting but also decision makers' understandings and perceptions are shaped by it (Cohen, 1963; Naveh, 2002; Zhang, 2010). The decision makers are influenced by the media's reporting in two ways: directly and also indirectly – they have to take into account the media's effect on their voters and act in a manner that is compatible with the views of the voters if they want to be re-elected (that is, in democratic countries at least)¹. While this is the input side of the media's influence on decision making in Naveh's model on the twofold involvement of foreign policy reporting in decision making (Naveh, 2002, 4), on the output side the media is an environment that the decision makers have to relate to when they make decisions so that they could influence the media in a positive way that would forge public support for the decisions taken. In the age of mass media and global communication,

¹ Similarly, authoritarian regimes also need to take into account the media's effect on their people, especially in the age of the Internet, as it is ultimately the people who dispose of dictators. This is why, for example, the Chinese elite is so afraid of every protest.

this highly influential role of foreign policy reporting continues, even though the relative deregulated state of internet-based media allows for a multitude of voices to be heard on the same foreign event or state.

Both the public and the decision makers have to be conscious of the way they are being influenced by the media. For the public it is important to see how different interests can bias how foreign events, states and policy is portrayed in order to overcome the possible mobilization function of the media as, according to Naveh, “the media [can] provide support to the established authority [...] Here the press performs its mobilizing and recruiting role, thus creating a joint media-government environmental component” (2002, 6), or, on the contrary, mobilize against the government’s position. For the decision makers the importance lies, on the one hand, in the same mobilization function of the media on themselves as well as the opinion of their voters or activist groups voiced by the media, and on the other hand, in the fact that the media can act as a channel of sending diplomatic messages between countries (Cohen, 1963, 198-202; Zhang, 2010, 237).

1.3. Literature review

Extensive searches for literature in the field were made, on the one hand, through the Web of Science and Worldcat, using different combination of search words: Chin*, Afric*, medi*, depict*, portray*. Further literature was collected through a snowball sampling style search using the bibliography of other secondary literature. However, even after thorough searches only a few journal articles and books related to the present topic were found.

According to Li Zhang’s longitudinal study on the media coverage China received between 1989 and 2005 (2010), the coverage of China increased in general during this period in the three transnational European newspapers that were analysed. Within this coverage, the dominant subjects dealt with were the economic, trade, finance and business on the one hand, and foreign relations and world affairs, on the other, while human rights issues took only 4.5, 7.8 and 11% of the coverage respectively. Zhang attributes the overall rise of China coverage mainly to the increase in economic, trade, finance and business reporting that increased steadily during the analysed period. Zhang did not study Sino-African relations which means that the topic of Sino-African economic cooperation could fit into many of her categories, including the dominant economic, trade, finance and business category, but most likely the

moderately significant foreign relations and world affairs category that took up less than half of the coverage of that of the economy, trade, finance and business but was still at the second place in all three of the analysed newspapers.

Li Zhang and Robin Brown (2009) direct their attention to the coverage of Chinese human rights issues in the Western media where they conclude that within their time frame of 1989-2005 there has been little connection between the human rights reality in China, that is measured by international NGOs, and the media coverage of human rights issues in transnational European newspapers, human rights issues having been under-represented in the media compared to their extensiveness in reality. They attribute their findings to the news reporting being determined by the shifting news agenda towards economic issues and by the sensitivity of diplomatic and political conflicts. Even though Zhang and Brown's paper focuses on human rights issues within China, it is possible that the coverage of human rights violations caused by China outside of its borders is not reported accurately in relation to the reality on the ground either. If this is indeed the case, it would mean the under-representation of good governance issues of the Sino-African relations, compared to economic issues.

However, as we have seen so far, even though there has been much written about the coverage of China in the newspapers analysed by the above scholars and also specifically of human rights issues, what seems lacking in the literature is a focus on the coverage of the Sino-African relations and their consequences, not least on good governance, including the respect for human rights. Furthermore, these papers don't concentrate on the patterns of meaning behind the media coverage of the topic.

One of the few researches that combine the media portrayal of China and Africa and also focuses on the patterns of ascribed meaning is Emma Mawdsley's paper on the representation of China, Africa and the West in British broadsheet newspapers (2008) that finds four consistent and frequent tendencies, or "narrative tropes" as Mawdsley calls them, in relation to the complexity of the topic. These tropes are 1) the homogenisation of the "Chinese" overlooking their diverse interests, 2) the focus on the negative impact of China's presence on the African continent, especially concerning violence, 3) portrayal of Africans as either victims or villains, de-emphasising agency, and 4) complacency of the benign Western actors. In her opinion, "the discursive patterns [the articles] employ act to systematically endorse images of African weakness, Western trusteeship and Chinese ruthlessness" (2008, 517) even

though she acknowledges that there existed alternative perspectives in her material. What Mawdsley specifically takes issue with in her paper are the stereotyping of the different actors, such as “the well-intentioned West (Dr Livingstone), [...] the amoral, greedy and coldly indifferent Chinese (Fu Manchu) [...] [and] a corrupt and/or helpless Africa (Dark Continent)” (2008, 523). This stereotyping has the effect of avoiding acknowledging the contemporary failures of the Western powers in connection with Africa (such as the Structural Adjustment Programmes) in the articles that deal with the China-Africa topic, thus creating a bias in favour of the West as opposed to China (2008, 523). Contrary to Mawdsley’s paper that concentrates on the general tendency of the “ruthless Chinese” portrayal and pays no attention to the alternative perspectives, in this thesis I am interested in the struggle over meaning fixation between different discourses. This includes possible differences in exactly how and why China is ruthless, if indeed this is a result of my findings, but can also include alternatives on what qualities and identities China is associated with in the analysed newspapers.

Interestingly, Deborah Brautigam devotes one of the chapters (2009, 273-306) in her book on Chinese aid and economic engagement in Africa to sorting out some of the “ruthless Chinese” myths that exists in the public and in the media about the direct consequences of Sino-African economic cooperation. While acknowledging that China’s presence does not help combat corruption and that Chinese businesses have still a long way to go in the field of corporate social responsibility, she challenges the common knowledge that, among others, Chinese aid is only about siphoning natural resources out of Africa and that China’s conduct is reversing efforts taken in the direction of good governance. She cites data on the fairly even distribution of funds among sub-Saharan states regardless of the amount of natural resources they have; shows through examples that China’s economic activity is not limited to the extraction of natural resources and infrastructure projects to ship resources to China, but also include everything from construction projects, like hospitals and universities, to creating export market for Chinese goods – what China’s presence is about is generating business. Moreover, she takes issue with the myth that the Chinese activities allegedly based solely on resource extraction is a grand strategy directed from Beijing, by pointing out the considerable freedom the contemporary Chinese companies enjoy. On the issue of good governance, Brautigam points out that the rhetoric and the reality of Western companies, donors and even international organisations are far from each other, while the Chinese themselves acknowledge that they are lagging behind when it’s about democracy and human rights. Their

stance seems to be that poverty reduction is needed first before the establishment of democracy, while “the lack of progress on democracy [leads to] political and economic instability” (2009, 286). While Brautigam’s is not a systematic review of the media’s perception of China’s economic engagement in Africa, it points out the revolving themes associated with the very topic my thesis deals with and shows a need to assess the problem of how the Sino-African development cooperation is depicted in the media.

1.4. Introduction to the structure of the thesis

In the following chapters of my thesis I am going to first introduce the theoretical background and the methodology of my research. To begin with, I am going to elaborate on the importance the media portrayal has on foreign policy decision making, followed by the introduction of discourse analysis and Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory that gives the theoretical backbone of my analysis. The chapter on theory is followed by the explanation of methodological issues concerning the thesis, including the practical choices made in relation to the research.

The chapters on theory and methodology are followed by the thorough analysis of the material and the presentation of the findings of the research. The analysis chapter is divided up into two parts each one of them answering one of the two research questions. In the conclusion I am going to discuss the consequences of my findings.

2. Theory: the mass media's role in foreign policy making and discourse analysis

2.1. The importance of the mass media's foreign reporting

First, before elaborating on discourse analysis and the specific approach used in this thesis, it is important to briefly explain why the foreign policy reports in the mass media are important for the foreign policy making process. As we will see, it is this that ultimately leads to the chosen theory and methodology.

The importance of the mass media for foreign policy, and more generally for peace, lies in the media's relation towards policy makers. Cohen distinguishes two main roles in this relationship: the role of neutral reporter and the role of active participant. The former invokes the press as "providing information that enables others to play a part in the fashioning of policy" (Cohen, 1963, 19), while the latter means being active in the policy making process. The first category comprises of the press as informer and interpreter but also as an instrument of the government as the neutral media faithfully wants to report on foreign policy (Cohen, 1963, 22-30); meanwhile the second category includes perceptions of the press as representative of the public opinion, the critic of the government, advocate of policy and ultimately policy making participant, an active part of the policy making process as it tries "to influence the opinions of both the public and the government official" (Cohen, 1963, 39, 31-47).²

From this short description of the media's role as policy maker, we can see that, while acting as part of the political process, the media influences both the policy makers and the public. To start with the public, Cohen writes about what he terms the map-making function of the media (1963, 12-13). This is significant as most of the people do not experience international affairs at first hand. Thus the media through which this information reaches people can have a high influence over what the public think about and can affect their views on particular matters. The media does not only supply information to its audience but also interprets, analyses and criticises international events. This way, the media is the main source for the understanding of

² Naveh also specifically speaks of the mobilization role of the media for or against the government, by supporting norms related to or contradicting the established authority (2002, 6), as already mentioned in the introductory chapter. This role can be seen as related to the role of the media as the critic of the government and possibly to the role as the instrument of the government in Cohen's categorization. However, since Naveh does not elaborate on this mobilization role further, it is not directly evident how this function corresponds to Cohen's categories.

complex international issues. That the citizens' views of international affairs are shaped by what they read and hear in the media affects the foreign policy making process. Legislators (and the President of the United States) are elected by the voters and thus have to take into account the views of the electorate if they want to be elected-re-elected. Furthermore, foreign policy makers have to try and obtain favourable media coverage for themselves and their policies but at the same time be aware of the way foreign affairs are represented in the media as the media is often viewed as a measure of public opinion (Cohen, 1963, 233). In this process decision makers would try to release information to the media that make them and their policy appear in a positive way (Cohen, 1963, 184-198).

The decision makers are not only indirectly influenced through their electors, but directly through the media's foreign policy reporting as well. According to Cohen (1963, 210-218), the press serves as an independent report on international events for policy makers, providing information to them in a somewhat similar way to the ordinary public³. Furthermore and more importantly, the media also provides evaluation of the happenings to decision makers that can translate into policy ideas and alternatives (Cohen, 1963, 219-224). As Cohen phrases it, "the work of columnists in comment, evaluation and analysis is explicitly aimed at the policy makers as well as at the ordinary citizen" (1963, 223-224). These two direct ways of affecting the decision makers especially apply to legislators who are not specialized in foreign policy (Cohen, 1963, 214-218, 222-224); these Cohen considers "not much different from an attentive citizen in his dependence upon the press" (1963, 215).

Chanan Naveh explains the relationship existing between the foreign policy decision making and the media in a model that attributes a twofold role to the media (2002, 4, 10-11). Naveh differentiates between the input and output component of the environment surrounding foreign policy making. This means that, on the one hand, the media is a source for decision making but external to it. When taking decisions the policy makers have to respond to the reality as it is perceived and depicted in the media. On the other hand, the media is on the output side of the decision making too: in this context policy makers have to consider what effect their decisions reported in the media will have on their own and their policy's image.

³ Newspapers not only have advantage over diplomatic reports in providing information because they reach policy makers faster, but also because the diplomatic reports build on newspaper coverage as well (Cohen, 1963, 211-212). Therefore, diplomatic reports represent a way of indirect media influence on policy makers. As the newspapers diplomats use are usually the newspapers of their host countries, it is also possible that conveyed messages from the host countries' governments reach the home governments through these channels (Cohen, 1963, 198-202; Zhang, 2010, 237).

Therefore, it is possible to view the relationship between the media and the policy maker as one that is interacting.

The two sides of this model correspond to Cohen's findings on the relations between policy makers and the press, as on the input side we can find the role of the press as informer, interpreter, a source of evaluation and analysis as well as the measure of public opinion. On the output side, there are the considerations leading to the policy maker's framing and disclosure of policy, including promoting policy domestically as well as abroad (Cohen, 1963, 184-202), as "the press is a useful handmaiden in the competition over policies. For this is the place where direct political support is needed if one view of policy rather than another is to prevail" (Cohen, 1963, 190).

Naveh sees the media's double-sided role as a result of the media's agenda-setting and framing capacities (2002, 7). What is meant by the former is that the salience of issues in the media determines the importance that the public, the audience of the media attaches to these issues (Naveh, 2002, 7). This is why Cohen can say in relation to the map-making function of the media, that "if we do not see a story in the newspapers (or catch it on radio or television), it effectively has not happened so far as we are concerned" (1963, 13). Meanwhile, what is more important to the present research, however, is the media's capacity to frame, that is, to construct reality by representing and interpreting it from possibly different, often struggling perspectives (Naveh, 2002, 8).

That foreign affairs are not tangible and directly experienced and that the media constructs our world by presenting, representing and interpreting reality, explains the importance of analysing what is said about international affairs and how it is said, in the media. For this we turn to discourse analysis.

2.2. Discourse analysis and the choice of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory

Discourse analysis is directed at discourses; however, since discourse analysis comprises of many approaches, there does not exist one consensual definition of what discourse is. Yet a common feature in discourse analysis is that the way people talk about the world is not a neutral, passive reflection of the world but actively constitutes, reproduces and transforms it (Bryman, 2012, 528-529; Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, 274; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 1).

There is no one true understanding of reality but multiple, and a discourse refers to one of these (Bryman, 2012, 529). For the analysis of the media's foreign reporting these understandings are important as the way the media talks about international affairs is constitutive of them for the ordinary reader and for the policy maker.

Discourse analysis denotes many different approaches. From these, Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory was chosen for the present research. This approach was published in *Hegemony and socialist strategy* in 1985 that deals with deconstruction of theories that are based on Marxism. Because of this, the use and study of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory has been mainly limited to the field of political studies (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, 265). Therefore, for a better understanding of discourse theory the following secondary sources were also used: Jørgensen and Phillips's *Discourse analysis as theory and method* (2002) and Carpentier and De Cleen's *Bringing discourse theory into Media Studies: The applicability of Discourse Theoretical Analysis (DTA) for the Study of media practices and discourses* (2007). Out of the three ways discourse theory can be applied for media studies as elaborated on by Carpentier and De Cleen – discourses about the mass media, discourses of the media and defining media as discourse -, this paper is going to use discourse theory in its second application, that is, “discourses of mass media, i.e. [...] the form and content of the discourses produced by the media” (2007, 273; original emphasis).

What remains before explaining Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory and making it applicable for the purpose of analysing foreign policy reporting on China in Africa is to elaborate on why this approach is useful for the present research. Although discourse theory has not been widely used for mass media analysis, it has its strengths for this purpose. As Carpentier and De Cleen explain, discourse theory is very macro-textual and macro-contextual (2007, 276-277). By the first they mean that discourse theory emphasises the meanings and representations that appear in the texts rather than the linguistic structure itself. This leads to an analysis focused on the content rather than the form and thus lends itself well to a research that aims at understanding the meanings attributed to foreign affairs that reach the audience of the media. On the basis of the emphasis of discourse theory on representations Carpentier and De Cleen define discourse theory's understanding of discourse as “discourse-as-representation”⁴ (2007, 277). On the other hand, macro-contextuality refers to “the social

⁴ Carpentier and De Cleen contrast Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory with Critical Discourse Analysis that has been more widely used in media studies than discourse theory. In the two researchers' understanding,

as the realm where the processes of the generation of meaning are situated” (2007, 277). Discourses, in discourse theory’s understanding, are situated both historically and culturally which shows the contingency of any meaning and thus the contingency of the social (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, 276; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 5). This contingency highlights that whatever is talked about in the media is changeable and thus research cannot aim at generalisation of the findings. The meanings’ contingency, as we will see, results in different discourses competing to permanently fix these meanings; but precisely because of the existence of competing discourses this can never happen. This opens up the possibility to examine the process of struggle over the fixation of meanings between contradicting discourses, and the characteristics of hegemonic meaning. Therefore, Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory is relevant for analysing struggle between alternative discourses as well as hegemonic meanings that influence the decision makers and the general public.

2.3. Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory

To explain Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory, a structure taken from Jørgensen and Phillips will be followed. They describe the approaches to discourse analysis – discourse theory being one of them - as a “theoretical and methodological whole” (2002, 4), which they refer to as a package that

contains, first, philosophical (ontological and epistemological) premises regarding the role of language in the social construction of the world, second, theoretical models, third, methodological guidelines for how to approach a research domain, and fourth, specific techniques for analysis. (2002, 4)

Thus, the introduction to Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory is going to start with the explanation of discourse theory’s philosophical basis and then proceed with the theoretical models.⁵

Critical Discourse Analysis is less macro-textual and macro-contextual than discourse theory and, because of Critical Discourse Analysis’s focus on linguistic textual analysis, its approach to discourse is understood as “discourse-as-language” (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, 277).

⁵ However, one problem with Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory is its lack of methodological guidelines and techniques (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, 272-273). This has contributed to the fact that discourse theory is not widely used in media studies. Methodological issues of discourse theory will be underlined and elaborated on in the chapter on methodology.

2.3.1. Philosophical premises

Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory's starting point is the radical poststructuralist idea that "discourse constructs the social world in meaning, and that, owing to the fundamental instability of language, meaning can never be permanently fixed" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 6), or phrased differently, "all social phenomena and objects obtain their meaning(s) through discourse" (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, 267). Ascribing meaning through discourses changes and reproduces the social world, since the different discourses indicate different appropriate ways of responding to a phenomenon – "*changes* in discourse are a means by which the social world is changed" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 9; original emphasis). This means that the character of the social world is not constant, solid and determined by something that exists outside of discourse, but is "constructed socially and discursively" and is in flux (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 5). In this way, Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory is anti-essentialist. They argue against a set of essential, pre-given characteristics that determine the world and the people in it (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 5, 33-34) - on this basis we can understand their work directed at the criticism of Marxism's preoccupation with classes based on economy (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001).

The premises above have to be complemented with several other propositions. First, saying that the social world only obtains meanings through discourse is not the same as saying that the material reality does not exist. Material reality does exist but "*nothing has any meaning outside of discourse*" (Hall quoted by Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, 278; original emphasis). This understanding leads to the assertion that it is not possible to go behind the discourses and thus to find "a 'truer' truth" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 18). The only way to access the material reality is through discourse, through the ascription of meaning. Our understanding of the world is based on discourses and, thus, is not an objective understanding. Therefore, Laclau and Mouffe take a critical approach to knowledge that is taken for granted, in a way that is characteristic of social constructionism (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 5). Second, these understandings and representations of the world change over time and place as they are historically and culturally constructed and contingent. Therefore, discourse theory's understanding of knowledge is anti-foundationalist in nature (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 5).

Third, for Laclau and Mouffe there is no separation between discursive and non-discursive dimensions of the social. They argue that all social practices are part of discourse, and are

discursive exclusively (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 19): “discourses are *material*” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 35; original emphasis). Therefore, it’s not just language that is changeable and that cannot be fixed permanently, but so are the different aspects of the social world. Furthermore, every social phenomenon is “organised according to the same principle as language” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 35-36), that is, relationally: as it will be explained further on, the meaning of a sign is acquired in relation to other signs in and outside of a particular discourse, while the meaning of a social phenomenon comes from the social phenomenon’s relation to other actions.

As it was said that discourses can never be permanently fixed, this means that they are changeable. Contact with other discourses, that understand the social world differently, can alter meaning and thus discourse which leads to struggle among discourses to fix meaning of the social world permanently in their way of understanding, that is to say, to create hegemony. This is why Jørgensen and Phillips can say that “a keyword of the theory is *discursive struggle*” (2002, 6; original emphasis). This discursive struggle for hegemony is what makes Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory useful for my research. However, to be able to talk about struggle, antagonism, hegemony and objectivity – the key concepts of discourse theory - we first have to introduce the way Laclau and Mouffe understand the creation of meaning and discourse.

2.3.2. The creation of meaning and discourse

According to Laclau and Mouffe, discourses, which can be defined as a fixation of meaning in a particular domain (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 26), are the result of the articulatory practice, where articulation is understood as “any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice” (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, 105). The element in this definition refers to the form of a sign (also referred to as signifier). During the process of articulation this signifier is connected with one particular signified, that is, a content of the sign. Through this temporary connection a so-called moment is created which is a signifier with one particular signified; “all signs in a discourse are *moments*” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 26; original emphasis). The meaning in the moment is relational: it is fixed on the one hand in relation to the other signs in the given discourse, and through exclusion it is related to alternative meanings, on the other. These relations worth a closer look separately.

First, within the discourse, the meaning of the moment is acquired in relation to nodal points. Nodal points can be understood as the main signs in the discourse. They are privileged in the sense that “around [them] the other signs are ordered; the other signs acquire their meaning from their relationship to the nodal point” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 26). Since nodal points assign meaning to the other signs, they are central to any particular discourse. However, the nodal points are themselves formed and have their meaning temporarily fixed while arranging meaning to the other signs and thus structuring the discourse. As nodal points are signs similar to moments, prior to articulation, whereas the form of the “normal” sign is called element, the form of a nodal point is referred to as floating signifier. Floating signifiers are especially open and prone to different ascriptions of meaning from different discourses, that is, they are “overflowed with meaning” (Torfinn quoted in Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, 268). Floating signifiers belong “to the ongoing struggle between different discourses to fix the meaning of important signs” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 28).

Second, the meanings of signs are fixed in relation to alternative meanings. An element is polysemic, meaning it has multiple possible meanings, multiple ways in which it can be turned into moment; that is different discourses create different moments from the same element by fixing the element’s meaning differently. Therefore, as Jørgensen and Phillips phrases it (2002, 27),

a discourse is a reduction of possibilities. It is an attempt to stop the sliding of the signs in relation to one another and hence to create a unified system of meaning. All the possibilities that the discourse excludes Laclau and Mouffe call the field of discursivity (1985:111). The field of discursivity is a reservoir for the ‘surplus of meaning’ produced by the articulatory practice – that is, the meanings that each sign has, or has had, in other discourses, but which are excluded by the specific discourse in order to create a unity of meaning.

The polysemy, characterising the elements, is reduced by the articulatory practice when one meaning becomes fixed. This is the exclusion of the possible meanings of the element. Therefore the meaning of the moment, the element with only one particular signified, is constituted partly by what it is not but could possibly be.

This exclusion is precisely what allows for struggle between discourses. This is because each discourse aims at creating moments out of elements with the reduction of their polysemy but they aim to fix different meanings for the signs (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 27-29). The

concept of discourse is not separable from the concept of closure, that is, from “the temporary stop to the fluctuation in the meaning of the signs” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 28). It has to be emphasised that this closure can only be temporary because the existence of the field of discursivity and the alternative meanings in it pose a danger to and threaten to undermine the discourse (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 28). New articulations can result in reinforcing the existing discourse but also in fixing different meanings for the elements and thus creating a different, competing discourse. The fixation of meaning is never complete and permanent, change is always possible.

While these are the governing principles of language, as said before, the whole social world works in a similar way. Laclau and Mouffe are especially concerned about identity. The subject gains its identity through relating to, being represented by a discourse and in this discourse the subject gets what is called a subject position. The subject gains identity by identifying with the subject position of a particular discourse. The subject position is similar to the nodal point in that there are signs that are linked to it to fill it with meaning and different discourses offer different contents to the subject position. To give meaning to an identity, these signs are linked around the nodal point of identity and together they compose a chain of equivalence. In chains of equivalence the signs are “sorted and linked together in chains in opposition to other chains which thus define how the subject is, and how it is not” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 43). For the creation of group identity, Laclau and Mouffe identified two processes: the logic of equivalence and the logic of difference. The function of the logic of equivalence is to create group identity via chains of equivalence by “bring[ing] together a number of identities in one discourse, without however totally eliminating their differences” (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, 270). The logic of difference, on the other hand, “breaks existing chains of equivalence and incorporates the disarticulated elements in another discursive order” (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, 270).

2.3.3. The understanding of struggle, antagonism, hegemony and objectivity

Articulations can create different, contradicting discourses that can alter the meaning of signs in other discourses. Because of the overdetermination of signs, especially the nodal points – that is, their multiple possible meanings -, the same reality can be understood and its meaning attempted to be fixed in contradicting ways by different discourses. In this way “conflict and struggle pervade the social” (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, 47). By struggle we can

understand contradicting meanings. However, when these contradictions become mutually exclusive, we can talk about antagonism. At the time of antagonism, “[t]he individual discourses [...] are part of each other’s field of discursivity, and [...] everything the individual discourse has included threatens to undermine the discourse’s existence and fixity of meaning” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 47-48). To dissolve the antagonism over meaning, hegemonic intervention is needed that fixes meaning “across discourses that collide antagonistically” and it succeeds “if one discourse comes to dominate alone, where before there was conflict, and the antagonism is dissolved” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 48). Hegemonic intervention makes alternative understandings suppressed and thus leads to naturalisation of one discourse. This, in Laclau and Mouffe’s terminology, is called objectivity.

Objectivity is then “where one perspective is naturalised and consensus prevails” and “what appears as given and unchangeable, [...] what seemingly does not derive its meaning from its difference from something else” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 36-37). Objectivity can alternatively be defined as sedimented discourse: discourse that is so well based that it is quasi forgotten that it is contingent. However, this objectivity can at one point in time be turned into struggle again; it is changeable owing to, as already mentioned, the impossibility of permanent fixation of meaning. Objectivity is, via hegemony, the product of political processes and struggle. Politics is in turn conceivable as being at the opposite end of the spectrum from objectivity in Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory, as objectivity is what seems natural, while politics is what is contested. Politics, in a broad term, is to be understood “as the manner in which we constantly constitute the social in ways that exclude other ways” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 36).

2.3.4. Critique of Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory

Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory has been criticised in many aspects and it is important to address these criticisms.

First, Laclau and Mouffe received critique for their highly poststructuralist stance that reality only gains meaning via discourses. Critics claim that this assumption means that “there is no reality, only representation” (Butler quoted by Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, 267). However, this claim is refutable: as already mentioned, gaining meaning only through discourse does

not mean that reality does not exist – “things can have a real, material existence in the world [...] [but] *nothing has any meaning outside of discourse*” (Hall quoted by Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, 278; original emphasis). A further philosophical assumption that brings about critique is that discourses cannot fix meaning permanently, because of the emphasis on contingency and change. This prompts the question of what kind of “truth” any research can lead to, a question that is addressed in the chapter on methodology.

Second, discourse theory received critique on the grounds of practical applicability, since Laclau and Mouffe did not elaborate on the methods and techniques relating to discourse theory (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, 272-273). This critique will be addressed further in the present thesis together with two practical problems that research using Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory faces. These two problems concern the demarcation of discourses and the inclusion of other theories in the analysis because of discourse theory’s rejection of the existence of a non-discursive dimension of the social.

2.3.5. Explanation of the changes made to the original theory

A third criticism that discourse theory has received is that its core concepts are undertheorized (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, 272; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 55). Jørgensen and Phillips take issue specifically with the concept of field of discursivity. To them, it is “unclear whether the concept refers to any meaning whatsoever outside of the specific discourse, or if it more narrowly refers only to *potentially competing* systems and fragments of meaning” (2002, 56; original emphasis). To have a distinction between these two fields is important as “not all possibilities are equally likely and not all aspects of the social are equally open” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 56), so Laclau and Mouffe do not deal with the likelihood that “some meanings are more probable than others, that some aspects are the objects of open struggle while others remain unquestioned at a given point in time (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 57). For this very reason Jørgensen and Phillips suggest the introduction of the concept of order of discourse.

This new concept of the order of discourse would take its place between discourse and the field of discursivity. Here discourse would retain its meanings as the partial fixation of meaning, while the field of discursivity would refer to “the general reservoir of all meaning not included in a specific discourse” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 56). Between the two, the

order of discourse would be defined as “a social space in which different discourses partly cover the same terrain which they compete to fill with meaning each in their own particular way” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 56). The terrain in which struggle, antagonism and hegemony would take place would be the order of discourse (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 56). To highlight the difference between the three concepts Jørgensen and Phillips (2002, 56) use the example of football and traditional Western medical discourse:

we asked if football, for instance, belongs to the field of discursivity of traditional Western medical discourse, since football is not included in medical discourse, or whether ‘the field of discursivity’ should be reserved to cover only potentially threatening meaning within the same sphere, for example alternative treatment discourses in the case of medical discourse.

In this instance, the discourse is the traditional Western medicine; the order of discourse would comprise of the potentially threatening meanings, for example, the alternative treatment discourses as these discourses partly cover the same terrain; while football would belong to the field of discursivity as football “does not, at the moment, belong to the same order of discourse as Western medicine” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 56). The concept of the order of discourse will be applied in the present analysis for reasons of clarity and analytical rigour.

3. Methodology and material

In the course of the theory chapter, the critique of Laclau and Mouffe that concerns the lack of developed methodological guidelines in relation to their discourse theory has been already referred to. Carpentier and De Cleen quote Howarth who claims Laclau and Mouffe only set out one rule in relation to methodology and this rule is “a ‘non-rule’: rules can never be simply applied to cases, but have to be articulated in the research process” (Howarth quoted in Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, 272). This is one of the reasons for the limited application of discourse theory to empirical analysis, the others being its focus on post-Marxism, the theory’s “rather abstract nature [...] and its more natural habitat of Political Studies” (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, 265). Therefore, Carpentier and De Cleen take as their task to introduce a “tool box” especially for media analysis on the basis of discourse theory. To this, I will return below, but first the choice over qualitative versus quantitative methods will be considered in brief.

3.1. Choice of method: qualitative versus quantitative methods

As indicated above, the usage of discourse analysis entails an intertwining relationship between theory and method. The methods used have to be closely connected to the theory and the research aim. This requires a methodological approach that makes it possible to analyse texts in quest for discourses as well as to analyse the meanings and representations that the different discourses intend to fix. In this regard I find quantitative research methods to be less relevant in this study.

However, as Bryman points out it is possible to pragmatically use the quantitative and qualitative research methods together in one research as research methods can be perceived as autonomous where a “research method from one research strategy is viewed as capable of being pressed into the service of another” (2012, 631). He advocates so called mixed methods research that “integrates quantitative and qualitative research methods within a single project” (Bryman, 2012, 628). While I consider the main core of my research to be of qualitative nature, as said above, I am also going to utilise quantitative research. I am going to introduce my material quantitatively and thus give a background to the subsequent analysis based on qualitative methods. Further on in the analysis I am also going to summarize my findings in quantitative terms such that it would be possible to see which are the objective meanings and

to what degree these are dominant over the other meanings. To answer the second research question it is useful to turn to quantitative analysis as well.

This application of both qualitative and quantitative analysis because of different research questions is one of the ways of doing mixed methods research (Bryman, 2012, 633, 640). In this research, I consider quantitative methods as secondary to qualitative analysis in that quantifying the material gives a background to the qualitative analysis on meanings and discourses in the case of the research question that is directed at the discourses present in the material. Secondly, the qualitative analysis is the basis for my findings of objective discourses and struggle over meanings that will be assessed quantitatively. This applies to answering the second research question that concerns struggle and hegemony among the discourses. From this perspective, the analysis is conducted by doing mixed methods research where quantitative and qualitative analyses are interwoven and are based on each other. On the other hand, I do not consider this research as genuine mixed methods research, first, because the application of different methods originates from the two different research questions and, second, because I am not going to use any definite quantitative research method per se but only going to quantify my material and my findings for a better understanding.

Such a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods is contrary to the epistemological “paradigm war” that emphasises the incompatibilities between the two research methods (Bryman, 2012, 650). While aware of this, I take a technical and pragmatical approach to the nature of qualitative and quantitative research. According to Bryman, such a view entails to give “greater prominence to the strengths of the data-collection and data-analysis techniques with which quantitative and qualitative research are each associated [as opposed to the epistemological and ontological principles in which quantitative and qualitative research are grounded] and sees these as capable of being fused” (2012, 631). In my view, the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods serves the different research questions best.

3.2. Analysis through two tiers of concepts

Carpentier and De Cleen set as their task to fill the methodological gap left by Laclau and Mouffe by creating a “tool box”. They suggest applying the concepts of discourse theory as “sensitizing concepts, that simply suggests »what to look for and where to look«” (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, 273). Through their case of audience participation in the television

program Jan Publick, Carpentier and De Cleen show their way of operationalising discourse theory. They apply two tiers of concepts: first the core concepts of discourse theory and second, additional concepts related to the subject of their research, that is, audience participation (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, 281). The usage of two tiers of concepts is the leading thread of the present analysis as well. However, before elaborating on the way these two tiers are applied in this thesis, two problems have to be addressed, as indicated in the theory chapter. These are the problem of discourse demarcation on the one hand, and of the inclusion of other, imported concepts, approaches and theories, on the other hand. As these two issues are connected in the case of the present research, they will be handled together.

3.2.1. Demarcation of discourses and inclusion of imported approaches

To start with the demarcation of discourses, the problem arises from the definition of the discourse itself. As Jørgensen and Phillips explain, the understanding of discourse as “a particular *way* of representing the world” (2002, 143; original emphasis) means that “the limits of the discourse are where the elements are articulated in a way that is no longer compatible with the terms of the discourse” (2002, 143) and thus this understanding does not solve the demarcation of discourses in practice. Due to this, Jørgensen and Phillips propose that discourse should rather be treated as an analytical concept, so that “the question of delimitation is determined strategically [by the researcher] in relation to the research aim” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 143-144).

For such a way of delimitating the different discourses help can be provided by secondary literature (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 144) that can yield the additional concepts for the analysis. However, this entails the problem of the inclusion of these imported approaches, theories and concepts. This is because Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory asserts that the social is discursively constructed, rejecting that recognition of the material reality is possible beyond discourses, as mentioned in the theory chapter. Therefore, the imported concepts, approaches and theories have to be conceived as part of an order of discourse as well (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 156).

3.2.2. The two tiers of concepts in the present research

3.2.2.1. The first tier

As indicated earlier, the first tier of concepts is constituted by discourse theory's core notions. Because this study deals with two research questions it seems useful to look separately at which concepts of discourse theory would be used in relation to each research question. To answer the first research question asking for the discourses present in the material the following concepts of discourse theory would be used: floating signifier, nodal point, element, moment and chain of equivalence. These notions are necessary to analyse what meanings are ascribed in the texts and whether these meanings belong to one or another discourse. The second research question is based on the first one's results and aimed at the analysis of the relationship between discourses. To answer this research question the analysis will draw on the concepts of struggle, antagonism, hegemony and objectivity.

To arrive at the second tier and thus the demarcation of discourses it has to be determined, on the one hand, which elements seem important in the order of discourse of the consequences of Sino-African relations, in order to be able to limit the scope of the analysis to only a few elements and their meanings. On the other hand, imported approaches are needed to allow the researcher to demarcate the distinct discourses that ascribe different meaning to the elements. These imported approaches help identify the particular discourses from one another.

To start with, determining which elements to look for, secondary literature on the relations between China and Africa, especially its economic aspects, were used. As the research questions are directed at the relationship between China and Africa based on the economic realm, it is first and foremost the meaning ascribed to this that the research is interested in to find out. As referred to in the introductory chapter, the Sino-African relationship's economic aspect is a special one in that it is a complex combination of trade, investment and foreign aid (Brautigam, 2009; Mawdsley, 2012; McKinnon, 2010). To comprise all the parts of this relationship, the term "development cooperation" was suggested that also emphasises the difference from traditional donor-recipient relations in the case of foreign aid flows from the advanced industrialised countries. What is of particular interest here is what meaning different discourses ascribe to the Sino-African development cooperation, especially concentrating on its consequences. Therefore, I take Sino-African development cooperation as the floating

signifier whose meaning is of high importance to the fixation of the other elements and in turn whose meaning is changed by the meaning of these other signs in the different discourses. Thus what needs to be investigated is the articulation through which the floating signifier “development cooperation” becomes a nodal point, a signifier with one particular signified.

Beyond the floating signifier, I aim at finding the ascribed meaning of other important elements in this order of discourse. As the development cooperation is a relationship between China and Africa, I regard these two as the elements whose ascribed meaning would be of secondary importance behind that of the nodal point. When inspecting the element “China”, I would take into account the fixed meanings of both the state of the People’s Republic of China, Chinese enterprises and Chinese individuals, such as officials and businessmen. Similarly, the analysis of the meanings ascribed to the element “Africa” would consider the different African states, the African leaders as well as the African people in general. In this instance, it has to be admitted, a chain of equivalence is used between these possible actors in the Sino-African relations that can lead to a different result from a research that does not group these actors together in such a way. However, I found creating such chains of equivalence necessary to avoid overcomplication and to make the research more flexible to the analysed texts. Furthermore, when there is a clear distinction in the texts between any of the actors grouped together, it is noted in the course of the analysis.

The same applies to a further element whose ascription of meaning is analysed here. This element is “the West” that in this research comprises of the advanced industrialised countries of Europe, the United States as well as enterprises that would originate from there. “The West” is deemed as a sign worthy of analysis because the United States and the former European colonialist powers have maintained a presence and significant interests on the African continent (Carmody, 2012, 33-55) which creates a possible conflict between them and China. In addition to the West two more elements were identified for analysis: “good governance” and “non-interference”. Good governance and non-interference mark the different approaches (at least in rhetoric) to Africa between the Western states and China and thus can be understood differently by discourses. Whereas the West promotes a model in its dealings with African states that is built on “free market economy and liberal democratic polity” (Carmody, 2012, 76), China’s stance has been guided by its long-standing Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, out of which the one that receives most attention is non-interference into internal affairs leading to a “no questions asked” or “no strings attached”

policy (Carmody, 2012, 68, 83; Lanteigne, 2009, 135). Good governance and, in relation to it, non-interference are interesting because, as Brautigam points out (2009, 273-306), most of the myths surrounding the relationship between China and Africa in the media are connected to these two concepts.

To be clear, what is of primary interest in this analysis is the different meanings ascribed to Sino-African development cooperation. Of further concern are the meanings that the different discourses fix for the elements “China” and “Africa”. Finally, the meanings of “the West”, “good governance” and “non-interference” will be analysed when they appear in the texts.

3.2.2.2. The second tier and demarcation of discourses on the basis of international relations theory

The imported approaches help in the demarcation of different discourses. For this, I relied on Hattori who identifies three answers to the question of how international relations theory understands foreign aid or, more precisely, how it understands what foreign aid does (2001, 634). These answers correspond to political realism, liberal internationalism and world system theory. In turn the way political realism, liberal internationalism and world system theory answers this question can be seen as three discourses competing for ascription of meaning within the order of discourse of the workings of foreign aid, or more widely development cooperation.

Before elaborating further on these three understandings and the principles that lie behind them, it is necessary to clarify one point. While identifying the three understandings of foreign aid in international relations theory, Hattori proposes a new understanding based on the anthropological and sociological concept of gift. Hattori tries to sideline the liberal internationalist, political realist and world system understandings in two ways. First, he explains the difference between gift and the two other types of resource allocation, economic exchange and redistribution. While he categorizes foreign aid as a form of gift, he states that confusion arises from the fact that the other types of economic activities, such as concessional loans, are often understood as being part of foreign aid. These forms of resource allocation he categorizes as economic exchange for “these involve contractual obligations to repay” (Hattori, 2001, 636). However, it was explained in the introductory chapter and above in this chapter, that the economic relationship between China and Africa is better understood as an

intertwining combination of foreign aid, trade and investment than just one of these. Secondly, Hattori concludes that the important point in relation to foreign aid is not what it does (to which question the international relations theory's understandings of aid are directed at, according to him) but what it is, a question answered by him on the basis of gift theory. To him, foreign aid is "symbolic, i.e. to signal and euphemize [...] the underlying condition of hierarchy between donor and recipient" (Hattori, 2001, 641). To this effect "what foreign aid does in a policy sense is secondary" (Hattori, 2001, 641). However, my research topic is aimed precisely at the consequences of this economic relationship between China and Africa. Therefore, I regard the delimitation of discourses on the basis of the three understandings based on international relations theory as valid and fruitful.

To understand how the three schools understand foreign aid, and more widely the development cooperation between China and Africa, first I will elaborate briefly on the main principles of these schools. Historically liberal internationalism preceded political realism that has asserted its place as an answer to the failure of the former. Therefore, this introduction to the three understandings starts with liberal internationalism, followed by political realism and finally world system theory.

Liberal internationalism grew out of the painful experience of the First World War but its roots go back further in time; here we can refer to Immanuel Kant whose *Perpetual Peace* has been of particular influence. Liberal internationalism aimed at creating a world order that prevented new wars. To this end it adapted "liberal political principles to the management of the international system" (Brown, 2001, 22) entailing changes both domestically and internationally. In the domestic realm liberal internationalism advocated pluralism and democratic political systems because it believed that free people, as opposed to autocratic or militaristic leaders, do not want to fight wars if they can make a decision over it (Brown, 2001, 22-23; Kant, 2002, 437; Steans et al., 2005, 24). Because of this pluralism, the state is not considered the sole actor in the international realm where cooperation should lead to institutional structures safeguarding peace (Brown, 2001, 23-24; Steans et al., 2005, 24). Looking at foreign aid in this context, one can say that, accompanied by the good governance criteria, foreign aid can lead to the political, social and economic enhancement of the recipient (Hattori, 2001, 634) that has the hope of leading to the democratic system liberal internationalists claim stops the reoccurrence of war. China with its "no strings attached" policy can be perceived as going against these principles.

Political realism emerged from the disappointment of the interwar period and the experience of the Second World War, as an answer to the perceived failure of liberal internationalism. Indeed, the institution of democracy allowed Hitler and Mussolini into power, while international cooperation and specifically the League of Nations did not manage to stop the Second World War from happening. This led to the pessimistic view of political realists that states, which are seen as the main actors in the international realm, are primarily self-serving, pursuing their own interests (Brown, 2001, 32-33). This interest is defined in terms of power but this interest and power can take many shapes in different contexts (Brown, 2001, 32-33; Morgenthau, 1994, 35-36). Whatever the shape these take, what is sure is that states pursuing their own interests will eventually collide with each other; conflict is seen as a natural part of the international relations (Brown, 2001, 33). What political realists do not accept is the imposition of ideologies of other nations, that is, state sovereignty is an inherent value in their view of international relations (Morgenthau, 1994, 38). In this context, states, especially great powers, would seek their interests on the African continent too, whether this interest is for example political influence on the African states or natural resources, particularly oil, essential for their economic survival. Therefore, it is natural to expect China and the Western powers to end up in conflict in and over Africa, in which foreign aid is “a policy tool [...] to influence the political judgments of recipient countries” (Hattori, 2001, 634). In this understanding, however, it is non-interference into the domestic affairs of the recipients that is valued positively, as opposed to the good governance criteria of liberal internationalism.

Finally, world system theory has been developed by Immanuel Wallerstein since the 1970s. Wallerstein (1988) elaborates on multiple TimeSpaces, different times that correspond to different spaces; these are the episodic geopolitical, the cyclico-ideological, the structural, the eternal and the transformational TimeSpaces. The long-term time and its space, that is, the structural TimeSpace, corresponds with historical systems, the current historical system being the capitalist world-economy (Wallerstein, 1988, 293; Wallerstein 1993). While the boundaries of the capitalist world-economy are continuously evolving, its enduring feature is the core-periphery dichotomy (Wallerstein, 1988, 293-294). The states belonging to the core, semi-periphery and periphery might change over time but the core always reinforces its power over the periphery by constraining the development of it. Wallerstein posits the North-South divide as a metaphor of the core-periphery dichotomy (1988, 294). In this context foreign aid is “a means of constraining the development path of recipient countries, promoting the unequal accumulation of capital in the world” (Hattori, 2001, 634); Wallerstein likens aid in

the international realm to the social welfare state on the domestic level, in that both serve as curbing the anger of those on the periphery, be it the working class or the Third World (1993, 2). Therefore, we can surmise that in the case of Africa the aid from the West serves the same purpose. What is more, although China possesses the characteristics of both the core and the periphery and can be thus understood as part of the semi-periphery, in the African context China could possibly be perceived more as part of the core because of the direction of the flow of aid, trade and investment from China towards Africa.

On the basis of these approaches the demarcation of discourses within the material is possible. However, the work does not stop here but “continues in the analysis of the material” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 144); the researcher has to be open to recognise other discourses that possibly emerge in the course of the analysis. I am going to pick up this line of thought in the analysis chapter. Before that, however, there are further methodological issues to discuss.

3.3. The researcher’s role

Closely connected to discourse analysis is the problem of the role the researcher takes during the research. When dealing with discourse analysis we have to remember that whatever research we conduct, it would always be influenced by, and itself influence the discourses existing in the specific order of discourse. Here lies a big challenge for the researcher, concerning the “truth” and validity of the findings of the research. Laclau and Mouffe’s claim of theoretical contingency that “it is a condition of knowledge that it is just one representation of the world among many other possible representations” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 21-22), that reality and thus the “truths” are socially and discursively created, raises the question: “what do we do about the ‘truth’ that we as researcher-subjects produce?” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 21-22). What the researcher creates is a text that is part of an order of discourse and as such, it has other possible discourses to compete with that just as readily represent reality. Furthermore, even though reality looks different from every perspective, “that doesn’t mean that all research results are equally good” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 21-22). Therefore, what makes a research like this valid is the stringent application of the theory and method on the one hand, and the clarity over the researcher’s position on the subject of the investigation and on “the possible consequences of their contribution to the discursive production of our world” on the other, according to Jørgensen and Phillips (2002, 21-23, 171-174).

In line with this, I take my research position as being influenced, on the one hand, by my acknowledgement of China's economic achievements and efforts taken towards poverty reduction and, on the other hand, by my sympathy towards the spread of democratic values and human rights. There are two points that I consider important in relation to the effect these double sympathies have on the research. The first is more connected to the process of conducting research, while the second relates to the possible consequences the research can have on the discursive production of the world, but certainly both of these points touch upon different aspects of the problem of bias.

First, the two sympathies often come into conflict when reading secondary resources and analysing the material. However, I regard this two-sidedness as a strength, as it enables a critical position towards the literature and the material, whether China's practice in Africa or that of the United States, the United Kingdom and the wider developed world are defended. Examining the secondary resources and the material through the lens of the two sets of values during the process of the research enabled me to overcome bias that otherwise would possibly have been much more difficult. From this perspective, I consider my position on my subject as positive in reducing bias.

Second, the two conflicting values created the basis, so to speak, for the study as indeed these motivated the choice of topic in the first place. My hope was and is that by analysing the often contrasting discourses, which exist in the media, the research will contribute to the understanding of the way China's engagement in Africa is perceived and by showing alternative discourses to the "ruthless Chinese", as Emma Mawdsley puts it – if indeed this is what the findings show -, my research could help towards reaching a more cooperative stance between China on the one hand, and the US and the UK on the other, that can enhance economic development, democratic and human rights in Africa, and ultimately peace, in contrast to rivalry and competition that creates a threat to global peace. While the first effect of my double sympathies on my research was deemed positive, I consider this second effect somewhat negative for the research. The wish for peaceful cooperation is harmless at best; however, from this perspective my position may seem biased towards a preferred outcome of the research. While this could compromise the validity of my research, I hope to show, by providing a consistent, transparent and accessible analysis, that it is not the case.

Leaving my position on the subject of the research behind, a further point in relation to the researcher's role in conducting the research, that I want to make and deem important, is that, just as it is important to be clear on one's position on the subject of the investigation, so important is also the clarity over the choices the researcher takes while conducting the research, as these choices heavily influence the outcome of the research itself. As my research is delimited to online opinion pieces and reportage in US and UK broadsheet newspapers between the beginning of 2009 and the end of 2011, I am going to deal in detail with these choices one by one in the rest of this chapter. When applicable I am going to compare my methodology to Mawdsley's article because of my similar topic to hers.

3.4. Reflection on the choices concerning the material

3.4.1. The choice of countries

The first choice that had to be made during the course of the research concerned the countries whose mass media I wanted to study. This choice was closely connected to the topic of the research. My aim was to research the media of those western states that have a close interest in the way Sino-African relations unfold. This research topic concerns the mass media coverage of the strained relationship between China and the developed world in Africa as a result of the Sino-African economic cooperation. Therefore, the media chosen for analysis should be that of the states prominently involved in African affairs.

I chose to look at the Sino-African cooperation in the Western European and American media because these states are well-established on the African continent, and it is China who poses a challenge to their interests and established aid system. I specifically decided to analyse the media of the United Kingdom and the United States. The former because of its past as the biggest colonialist power, while the latter because of its special place in the world as the sole superpower who can feel the most threatened by the rising power of the PRC. In this regard Emma Mawdsley elaborates on the threat of a "zero-sum, ahistorical, event-driven and rather superficial understanding of China" (Mawdsley, 2008, 523) by the US policy community that can pose potential threat to peace "if the US, supported by Europe, refuses to accept this transition" to a new world order caused by the rise of China (Arrighi and Silver quoted by Mawdsley, 2008, 522). While Mawdsley herself does not analyse the American media, only

the British, I deem it important to include the only superpower's media in my research out of reasons mentioned above.

There is no doubt that with the decision to limit the analysed media to that of the US and UK a number of countries was left out that otherwise play a role in Africa. Obviously the biggest absentee is the PRC as well as the other great former colonialist power France. It would have been also interesting to analyse different African media outlets. However, practical reasons, such as temporal restrictions and limitations of volume flowing from the format of a Master's thesis, made the current choice of material reasonable. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised to the western media. However, it has never been intended as the aim of the present thesis. The aim of the thesis was to reveal and analyse mass media attitudes towards the Sino-African development cooperation by means of discourse analysis of a limited but fairly representative selection of American and British newspapers. While it is possible that the findings of this thesis correspond to other European media for example, this can only be verified by further research covering a wider range of countries and/or mass media.

3.4.2. The choice of broadsheet newspapers

The next decision that had to be made in relation to the present research was the type of media to be analysed. Two choices presented themselves, namely the analysis of print media (e.g. newspapers) or that of television news. My decision for the former was, on the one hand, a practical one. Here the choice was influenced by possible accessibility problems of television news coverage archives and the challenging transcription of not just the text of these news but also the video images shown. On the contrary, analysing newspapers does not involve lengthy transcription where there is always a possibility of misinterpretation of the nuances in, for example, the tone or the mimic of the presenter. The images attached to the newspaper texts are also readily available. On the other hand, a further consideration was given to the choice of analysing newspapers vis-à-vis television news. This concerns the view that decision-makers, and indeed the general public, have an easier access to print media than to television media on a daily basis while at or on their way to their work place (Cohen, 1963, 8); “[o]ne need only catch the morning train to see the number of people busily reading the latest news” (Cowen, 2001, 199). Moreover, broadsheet newspapers, especially their online editions, can present their subjects more in-depth than television news could (Cohen, 1963, 8).

Within the print media it is broadsheet newspapers that became the subject of the present research. Broadsheet newspaper is defined by Mawdsley as “a vernacular term, which originally referred to the size of the newspaper, and which has connotations of more serious, quality reporting and analysis” (2008, 516). It is precisely this quality reporting and analysis that makes broadsheet newspapers important to decision makers and the general public and thus singles them out as well-suited for this research, as opposed to their alternative, tabloid newspapers, which are associated with sensational, entertainment-driven journalism.

Two newspapers from each the US and the UK were chosen. These are *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* from the United States, and *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Guardian* from the United Kingdom. My aim when selecting newspapers was to include in the analysis broadsheet newspapers from across the ideological scale in an effort to bring out a wider range of possible discourses. Furthermore, these newspapers were selected also on the basis of their wide circulation.

The New York Times’s daily print circulation for the year 2009, according to its own account, was nearly a million daily, while this number was even higher for Sundays (“About the company”, n.d.). *The New York Times*, which is based in New York City, is well-acclaimed with 108 Pulitzer Prizes and Citations (“About the company”, n.d.). To keep up its leadership, *The New York Times* also established an online platform. While *The New York Times* is generally considered as having no political bias, the public editor in 2004 (Okrent, 2004) stated in an opinion piece that *The New York Times* is a liberal newspaper, receiving disapproval from both the right and the left. Furthermore, he praises the even-handed work of the Op-Ed page editors balancing the views of five liberal columnists out of seven (Okrent, 2004).

The Wall Street Journal, also based in New York City, includes in its circulation data the print as well as the digital editions. On this basis, *The Wall Street Journal* declared itself “the No. 1 U.S. newspaper, with average weekday circulation of 2.1 million” on the basis of the Audit Bureau of Circulations sources measuring circulation between October 2011 and March 2012 (“Wall Street Journal remains No. 1 US newspaper”, 2012). (This source placed *The New York Times* to the third place in the US with more than 1.5 million weekdays and 2 millions on Sundays (“Wall Street Journal remains No. 1 US newspaper”, 2012).) *The Wall Street Journal* is a traditionally conservative newspaper owned by Rupert Murdoch since 2007.

The Daily Telegraph had a circulation of more than 600 thousand, according to data published by *The Guardian* for July 2011 (“ABCs”, 2011). This placed *The Daily Telegraph* as the largest daily broadsheet newspaper in the United Kingdom. While it is “common knowledge” in the United Kingdom that *The Daily Telegraph* is a conservative newspaper, this sense is underpinned by a poll conducted into the voting intentions of British newspaper readership by Ipsos MORI in 2005: 64% of *The Daily Telegraph*’s readers were certain that they would vote for the Conservatives (IPSOS Mori, 2005). *The Daily Telegraph* launched its website called Electronic Telegraph in 1994 which it later rebranded as telegraph.co.uk that also includes *The Sunday Telegraph*.

The Guardian’s circulation in July 2011 was nearly 250 thousand (“ABCs”, 2011) placing it well behind *The Daily Telegraph* but being still the highest ranking left-leaning broadsheet newspaper in the United Kingdom. *The Guardian*’s website declares that we “publish a plurality of voices, but our centre of gravity as a progressive, liberal, left-leaning newspaper is clear” (“Comment is free: about us”, 2008). This left-leaning and liberal stance is reflected in the voting intentions of *The Guardian*’s readership as measured by the above mentioned poll by Ipsos MORI in 2005: while 48% of *The Guardian*’s readership were certain to vote for Labour and 34% for the Liberal Democrats, only 7% were certain to vote for Conservative (IPSOS Mori, 2005). The web edition of *The Guardian* and *The Observer* is the guardian.co.uk, originally called Guardian Unlimited. As Cowen noted in 2001, “the Electronic Telegraph and Guardian Unlimited rank as some of the most well-known in Britain and have received widespread acclaim” (Cowen 2001:190).

As it can be seen from the above mentioned details of the selected newspapers, the pairs of newspapers chosen from both the UK and the US are on the opposing ends of the electoral spectrum.

3.4.3. Chosen genres

While Emma Mawdsley’s study includes “articles [...] covering reportage, editorial columns and op-ed pieces, while excluding the business, travel and sports sections” (2008, 517), my data collection also included the business section due to the topic of economic relations between China and the African continent. This decision to analyse mostly opinion pieces was taken out of the consideration that in opinion pieces the journalist has the space to express

views beyond the factual news coverage since the latter can often only afford limited comments on this thesis's topic such as: "The Chinese government, and its state-run companies, have struck lucrative deals with some of the most notorious governments in Africa" (Roberts, 2009). While there is no doubt many elements of possible discourses can be found in a simple sentence like this one and it certainly fits at least two of Mawdsley's narrative tropes – namely, the negative impact of Chinese presence and the portrayal of African leaders as villains –, I was looking for articles that could further elaborate on the problems at hand. Furthermore, opinion pieces give a chance to their writers to express their own views (hence the name too) which can be loaded with different discursive influences that can affect the readers. Due to these two factors, the decision was taken to omit news coverage and to limit the focus to opinion pieces and reportage. Opinion pieces include editorials, op-eds (opinion pieces that usually appear on the opposite page to the editorial page, written by experts in a specific field) and may include columns.

I decided to access my material via the selected newspapers' online websites. The reasons lying behind this decision are twofold. On the one hand, there is the growing popularity and thus importance of online editions. On the other hand, the usage of online websites allows accession to extra non-traditional material, namely journalist blog entries. While the newspapers' online websites offer access to the printed articles, their interactive nature means additional information to and influence on the readers. Therefore, where it was possible I searched the journalist blogs and included the relevant entries into my research material too. This mainly applies to *The Daily Telegraph* but also to *The Guardian*. Furthermore, the chosen time frame, that I am going to elaborate on further in the following section, means that the study comprises the week in May 2009 when *The Guardian* published a series of articles and videos entitled "China at the crossroads" which showed different aspects of the modern China. As most of the articles included in this series were reportage I considered this a good opportunity in spite of the multiple themes covered by the series.

Moreover, the online archives of the analysed broadsheet newspapers made material easily accessible for research. The terms used to search the online archives of the newspapers were Chin* and Afric*. The amount of articles was further limited by the researcher; only those pieces got included into the analysis where the whole or the overwhelming part of the article concerned China's economic conduct in Africa.

A further implication of the usage of online articles was the inclusion of the different editions and sister papers of the selected newspapers, thus broadening the scope of the material and possibly the discourses included. Thus the data collection also included articles from *The Sunday Telegraph* (the sister paper of *The Daily Telegraph*, published on Sundays), *The Observer* (the sister paper of *The Guardian*, published on Sundays), the *International Herald Tribune* (which shares its columnists with *The New York Times*) and the European and Asian editions of *The Wall Street Journal*.

3.4.4. Time frame

The final decision concerning the selection of my material was that of the time frame. My time frame differs from Mawdsley's that covers a seven-year-long period between 2000 and mid-2007. This is, on the one hand, a much longer period than what could be incorporated into a Master's thesis. With regard to the limited scope of a thesis, the decision was taken to choose a time frame of a shorter length.

On the other hand, Mawdsley's article, written in 2008, deals with the material of the previous seven years, that would allow her to consider changes in issue coverage. As she writes, "(t)his time period captures a shift from a period when there was very little indeed reported on Sino-African interactions, to a situation of much more prominent coverage. This is indicative of a wider shift from neglect to engagement" (Mawdsley, 2008, 516). On the contrary to this, my time frame, due to its shorter nature, is much closer to the present time and does not allow for considerations of changes. It is the present day discourses concerning the Sino-African development cooperation that is the focus of my research.

The time frame was chosen to be from the beginning of 2009 to the end of 2011. The starting date was drawn to be the 20th January 2009 to coincide with the inauguration of incumbent president of the United States, Barack Obama, thereby signifying the emphasis on the present day discourses under his tenure. This, however, was not possible in the case of the United Kingdom that saw a change in government in May 2010 from Labour to a coalition of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats. This shift of government could possibly result in a

change in discourses that could be visible in the material. Meanwhile the end date of the time frame was determined by the end of data collection itself.⁶

By the end of my research and the completion of this thesis paper, the upcoming American presidential election means a possible change in China-policy, that could alter the prevailing discourses about the Sino-African development cooperation as well, which could be due to a new president's policy or the different line a second Obama-administration could take without having to be worried about re-election. Therefore, the results of my research should be taken strictly as an analysis of the present discourses and not as an indication of how the media is going to continue depicting the Sino-African relations.

⁶ The time frame being closer to the present can also enable me to compare Mawdsley's results to my findings.

4. Analysis

4.1. Introduction to the material

The analysed material consists of 21 articles from four newspapers. Out of these, four was published by *The Wall Street Journal*, three by *The New York Times*, while from the other side of the Atlantic four articles come from *The Daily Telegraph* and ten – nearly half of the overall number - from *The Guardian*. This shows a big disparity between *The Guardian* and the other three newspapers in interest in the topic. This poses the danger of leading to skewed results in the case *The Guardian* keeps itself to one discourse that might seem like a hegemonic discourse across the whole material. On the other hand, such a result could still be a valid result but one that would need to be handled with caution.

The material comprises of reportage, business articles, opinion pieces and blog entries (see p. 37-39). As expected, it was *The Wall Street Journal* that carried business articles that amounted to three out of four articles, the fourth being an opinion piece. The articles from *The New York Times* are all op-ed pieces, that is, articles from contributors outside the newspaper but which, as published by the newspaper, constitute part of the articulatory process and thus of the creation of discourse. This last observation applies to the four blog entries from *The Daily Telegraph* as well. Finally, as most of the articles come from *The Guardian*, this newspaper presents the biggest variety of genres, including six opinion pieces from the “Comment is free” section, one blog entry and one reportage from the “China at the crossroads” series. In addition, the material contains one leader with the title “We must compete for respect in Africa”, and one editorial entitled “A fresh chapter is opening in Africa’s history” both from *The Guardian*. As leaders and editorials reflect the opinion of the newspaper as a whole, as opposed to the opinion of one journalist, these are given specific importance in this analysis.

This chapter is divided on the basis of the two research questions, starting with the question on the discourses found in the analysed media, followed by the question on struggle and objectivity among these discourses.

4.2. First research question: what discourses are there in the media?

In order to find the meanings that the different discourses fix for the floating signifier and the five elements, a thorough and comprehensive reading of the articles was required together with the analysis of the accompanying illustrating pictures that can further make the meanings of the signs precise. Therefore, where pictures were available the analysis incorporates these too.

4.2.1. Expectations before the analysis

Before elaborating on the analysis of the material itself it is important to be clear about the researcher's preliminary expectations. As mentioned in the chapter on methodology, on the basis of Hattori's observation the primary expectation was that three different discourses would present themselves in the material, related to respective international relations schools. These schools in turn discursively construct the meanings of signs that were introduced in the methodology chapter as well, and more widely construct reality of Sino-African cooperation. To be clear, it is necessary to explain how the meanings of these signs were expected to be ascribed by the three discourses before the analysis.

The liberal internationalist discourse, with its focus on international cooperation, is expected to fix the meaning of the Sino-African development cooperation nodal point as undesirable interference into the legitimate furtherance of good governance by the West. Here the China sign would be understood as the expander of non-democratic values, while the meaning of the West would be that of a helper where Africa's meaning would be split to rogue leadership on the one hand, and to-be-helped victims on the other. The representations of China and the West lead to ascribing the meaning of helping rogue leaders to the non-interference sign, non-interference being the guiding principle of China's foreign policy, and the meaning of the aim of Western aid to the good governance sign.

With the nations' self-interest in focus and competition between sovereign states being inherent in the world order characterised by anarchy, the political realist discourse is expected to see the Sino-African development cooperation as a tool of Chinese foreign policy competing with the West for natural resources and political influence. This nodal point fixes the meaning of China and the West as competitors for influence and natural resources, while

the meaning of Africa is expected to be a kind of field of competition that is abundant in capturable natural resources and is contested for political influence⁷. In this discourse the sign of non-interference would be understood as a central principle of international relations, while good governance would not feature as a sign.

As world system theory, built on Marxist tradition, emphasises the difference between the accumulating capitalist core and the periphery abundant in labour and resources, and China's place in the world system understood as a core power as explained before, China's meaning would probably be fixed as a state from the core that is exploiting the riches of the periphery for its own use, just like the West. Here a logic of equivalence could possibly be observed between China and the West, creating a chain of equivalence, equating these two subjects as colonialists while glossing over their differences. Therefore the nodal point of Sino-African development cooperation would be given the meaning of an exploitative relationship similar to that in the colonial times between the Western powers and Africa, with Africa's meaning fixed as a periphery abundant in resources, similar to that in the political realist discourse. Non-interference and good governance would not be expected of playing a role in this discourse.

The liberal internationalist and the world system discourses would display China's ruthlessness and African weakness, as observed by Mawdsley (2008, 517), although in different ways: while in the liberal internationalist discourse it is China's non-compliance with the cooperative stance of the international order aiming towards good governance that underlies its ruthlessness and the victimhood of the African people can be understood as a weakness, Chinese ruthlessness and African weakness are perceived in an economic sense in the world system discourse as colonialist versus the exploited periphery. However, it is the liberal internationalist discourse only where we can also find the "benign West" discursive pattern. According to Mawdsley (2008, 517, 522), these three patterns are dominant in her material which could suggest that the liberal internationalist discourse featuring all three patterns would be an important discourse in the present research as well.

⁷ Indeed, that the PRC could take its seat in the United Nations Security Council as a permanent member is attributed to its efforts to win over the votes of developing countries from Taiwan (Brautigam, 2009, 67). This case highlights the importance of political influence exercised upon other states in the international relations.

To say that the expectation is that the above three discourses would be determinant does not, however, mean that it is not possible that there would be other discourses present in the material. This is only one possible delimitation of the different discourses by the researcher, based on the literature at hand, and so there is a chance that it has to be revised as a consequence of the analysis.

4.2.2. Material examples

In the following, I am going to examine how each of the above discourses appears in the material.

4.2.2.1. Liberal internationalist discourse example

A blog entry by Tim Collard published on *The Daily Telegraph*'s website on 15 July 2009, entitled "So what are the Chinese up to in Africa?", at first sight might be viewed as a positive account of China's relationship to Africa as it elaborates on how the Chinese efforts might aid poverty reduction better than the Western efforts. However, the last paragraph tells us what the main point of the article is: China's "aim of thwarting any drive towards global democracy". Indeed, if we look closer at the text leading up to this conclusion we find that the journalist often contrasts the Chinese with the West. For example, the conditions attached to aid given to African states include, in the case of the West, the "»good governance« criteria" which is not at all present in the Chinese criteria that only focuses on the political strings against Taiwan. A further contrast is implied in the following comment: "like other dictatorships, they [the Chinese] can build autobahns". This is a direct reference to Hitler's Germany as main adversary to the British and the Americans in the Second World War. Therefore, we can say that the meaning of the nodal point of Sino-African development cooperation is that of a tool for China's political goal to promote and spread non-democracy. This cooperation is a tool in the competition of values between China and the West. From this meaning flow the meanings of China and the West. They are competitors in the ideological realm: while the West represents the "drive towards global democracy", China represents the "thwarting" of this drive. Africa becomes the field of competition of these conflicting values that take place in the dictatorships of Africa – this is evident in utterances, such as "bad governance", "sovereignty-obsessed non-interventionist dictatorships" and the Chinese "just sucking up to Third World governments by offering aid without political strings attached",

that together emphasize the negative side of Africa (“darkest Africa”), over the positive image of victimhood. Here non-interference, even as it is pointed out that it is “not quite true”, acquires a negative meaning because of its neglect of good governance that is a desired outcome of the West’s conduct.

While it seems that this article showcases the clear-cut case of the liberal internationalist discourse, it has to be mentioned that on the surface it also acknowledges that the West could learn from the Chinese way of conduct, as it is also admitted that the Western efforts towards poverty reduction through a push towards good governance were not successful. These two considerations do not fit smoothly into the idealist discourse outlined earlier. A further point to be made in connection with the articulations present in this article is the way China’s aim of thwarting the democratic drive is to be achieved, namely by creating “a solid bloc of sovereignty-obsessed non-interventionist dictatorships”. This point would fit more easily with the political realist discourse that originates after the Second World War and the experience of the opposing blocs of the Cold War.

4.2.2.2. Political realist discourse example

The Wall Street Journal’s business reportage “Get ready, here China Inc. comes”, by Michael J. Enright, W. John Hoffmann and Peter Wood published on 24 February 2010, elaborates on the business competition between China and Western companies. This competition is directed at resources, as evidenced by the listing of industries in which Chinese enterprises have invested including “oil, aluminium and minerals”, but furthermore at the service sector and at “preferential access to [...] business opportunities”. Therefore, the meanings of the China and the West are fixed as competitors; indeed, the word “competition” and its synonyms appear nine times in the text, even going as far as calling the Chinese the “enemy” of Western companies in the subtitle. While the meaning of “competitor” is the only meaning that applies to the West, the meaning of China’s conduct is further enhanced by its quest “to project soft and hard power on the international stage” that fits well with the competitive dynamics and zero-sum stance of political realism. Here Africa is the stage of the competition between China and the West where their investments are directed. Therefore, the development cooperation between China and Africa means investments for China, as opposed to the West, that also yields the opportunity to project power – thus tool for China to increase its power at the expense of the West.

Further underlines the points of this article another reportage in *The Wall Street Journal* from a few months later – 13 May 2010 -, entitled “China defends activities in Africa” written by J. R. Wu. Here Africa is referred to as “the resource-rich continent”, while China is “becoming an important investor, creditor and donor” but also “preying on the continent’s resources”. The core of the Sino-African development cooperation here is also doing business with the exclusion of the West, as underlined by a quote from the Chinese vice commerce minister directed at the West: “»It’s like marriage. The husband and the wife are happy. Their happiness quotient is very high. But suddenly you have someone beside you that keeps criticizing the marriage,« he said. »If Africa has a criticism about China’s investment in Africa, then that is a problem.«”

However, in these articles the role of the signs good governance and non-interference are not in line with the way the political realist discourse is explained in the section on expectations. While good governance is exempt in the first article which parallels that of the expected, in the second instance we witness a reference to labour rights as “key challenge[...]” (Wu, 2010) in the case of China’s presence in Africa. In the case of non-interference, it is not mentioned in the first article at all, while the second one only mentions its result as it “sets back the local economy” (Wu, 2010). Furthermore, in the second article it is mentioned that China preys on the African resources that could also be viewed in the context of the world system discourse. Here we can see that the political realist discourse is not apparent in its full and features meanings associated with the other discourses which can lead to a conclusion that it is in struggle with other discourses.

4.2.2.3. World system discourse example

The Daily Telegraph’s website has another blog entry, this time by Peter Foster, on the same topic dating from a month later – 28 August 2009 - than the one analysed in relation to the liberal internationalist discourse. This time the title reads: “Will China deliver to Africa where Europe failed?” and the motive of Western (or in this case European) failure potentially corrected by China appears here too. Europe failed in developing Africa but in this case the emphasis is on the past: the failure is attributed to colonialism. However, the answer to the question posed in the title is negative: China follows the exploitative path of the past colonialist powers. While acknowledging that China “has done more for Africa in concrete terms (quite literally) than Europe ever did”, on an other level China’s practices in Africa are

not far from that of the colonialists. It is not just the extraction of the continent's raw materials, which can be seen as similar to the "cynical exploitation at the hands of its [Africa's] former European colonial masters", but the "use [of] their fiscal muscle to live above the law" that showcases the colonialist stance of China. A reference to China's own experience and humiliation at the hands of the colonialist powers creates a parallel between the colonialist Europe and the present-day China: it is the practice of the "de facto »extra-territoriality«" that acts as a logic of equivalence equating the meanings of China and the West as colonialists. In this case the meaning of non-interference as a fallacy is obvious, as is the lack of good governance. The Sino-African development cooperation acquires the meaning of the means which create and maintain the exploitative relationship.

This exploitative relationship can be conceived as the exploitation of the African people who appear as victims in the text – examples include the Zambian miner sacked and blacklisted for "trying to get justice after being beaten by his Chinese master" and the more general faceless people who appear in the text as "growing number of riots and protests". China has to face the workers having to wait in the rain without a bus shelter for 10 years while the politicians are "effectively bankrolled by the Chinese infrastructure programs". The difference is obvious between the masses, the victims on the one hand, and the politicians, the "corrupt African kleptocrats" corrupted by "power and money" on the other. The conclusion of the article presents a further chain of equivalence: that between "Chinese, Africans [the leaders] and Westerners". What creates the equivalence here is the "game of power and money, twin forces which, history relates, corrupts us all equally", while the victims are the exploited people of Africa.

A final point that I want to make in connection to this article is that we can see that, while the exploitative oppression of Africa in general by the Chinese can be viewed as part of the world system discourse, the sharp differentiation between the African leadership and the people is a feature of the liberal internationalist discourse. Furthermore, the equation of the Chinese, the West and the African dictators is a discursive pattern that can be related to world system theory's Marxist roots but can also possibly be a fusion of the world system and liberal internationalist discourses. We can see here that even those articles that best present one discourse are influenced by other possibly meanings.

4.2.2.4. Mixed discourse articles

Above we have showed how the three discourses based on international relations theory typically play out in the articles. However, it was also evident that while meanings from these discourses are overwhelming, they also mix with meanings from the other discourses. One example to articles mixing discourses in a way that none of them seem to be the main discourse is the leading article published by *The Guardian* on 18 October 2009: “We must compete for respect in Africa”. As this is an article reflecting the views of the newspaper, it is important to take a closer look at it.

The article starts with the picture of a massacre in Guinea committed by a regime that is backed by its deals with China. At first, the discourse seems obvious. China is “propping up noxious regimes [...] no questions asked”. This is the liberal internationalist discourse compressed into one sentence: China is “unperturbed by human rights abuses” and is “unlikely to raise standards of governance”; Africa is about the “noxious regimes” (the victims do not get much mention here); China’s non-interference is closely related to the abuses committed by the African leaders.

However, there appears a change in discourse when it comes to the meaning of the West whose colonial past is emphasised much in line with the world system discourse. In relation to this, China is also understood as a power of colonialist practices that “mirror much of western policy over the last 150 years”. Africa in this context seems more like a continent that is economically exploitable with “mineral wealth”, being an “arena for a Chinese-run commercial structure leaving no room for local businesses to grow”. The colonialist past of the West is also contrasted with its current embrace of good governance. The idealist and the world system discourses mix in the understanding of the West. It is “proved guilty of bad practice” exemplified by “support for apartheid, military dictatorship, monopolisation of natural resources”, but that “it made human rights part of the terms of discussion is laudable” even if the successes are lacking.

The nodal point Sino-African development cooperation’s meaning in this article is twofold. On the one hand, it is understood as being China’s tool to prop up regimes characterised by bad governance and thus hinder the spread of good governance. Around this nodal point, meanings of the signs are ordered according to the liberal internationalist discourse. China is

helping rogue regimes; Africa is mainly understood as these leaderships; efforts for good governance from the West are laudable; non-interference is a tool for helping the regimes. Even the West can be seen positively when the leader reads:

But if the charge is that Chinese involvement is bad for Africa, it presumes western investment would be better. Perhaps it would. In the recent years, trade and aid policy in the west has started taking seriously anti-corruption, governance and democracy issues.

On the other hand, the meaning of Sino-African development cooperation is attempted to be fixed as an exploitative relationship by the world system discourse. The signs around the nodal point understood in this way gain meaning as follows. China's conduct mirrors the past Western practices; Africa is a continent that the West in the past and China at present want to exploit (although this meaning does not appear this expressively); the West is compromised by its past colonial stance and is still not doing everything it "ever talked about".

In the end, from these two mixing discourses one can derive the conclusion that "Beijing has no political or economic incentive" to act in the favour of the African people. What these two discourses have in common is the discursive trope Mawdsley identified: the "ruthless Chinese". To this comes the conclusion the article arrives at, that is: "[i]f western democracies want to influence African development they must compete with the offer from Chinese autocratic state capitalism". This rhymes with the third discourse based on international relations theory, that is, with the political realist discourse where China and the West are competing with each other – for influence in this case.

4.2.3. Other meanings in the material

To conclude what we have just said in the previous sections, while there were more or less clear-cut examples of the three discourses outlined at the start of the present analysis, it was also clear that all of these examples had discrepancies in them. Some of these discrepancies could be attributed to one of the other two discourses, for example the sign good governance typical in an liberal internationalist discourse but appearing in the article over which the political realist discourse prevails otherwise, or the meaning of China's conduct as creating an influence block originating in the political realist discourse but found in an article of largely liberal internationalist discourse, or the divide of the meaning of Africa into rogue leaders and

victims in an article of world system discourse. Moreover, while these discrepancies could be accounted for by the struggle between the three discourses to fix meaning, we found an articulated meaning that cannot be traced to any of the three discourses described above. This meaning is the failure attributed to Western efforts. It is obvious that there is an overflow of meaning here, that behind this meaning lies one or more other discourses that have not been accounted for in this analysis. At this point we have to look at the whole material.

Out of the 21 articles analysed in the present research 11 can be deemed as mainly showcasing one of the three discourses that we have looked at so far. The categorisation of the articles as being mainly of one discourse was done on two bases. First, the ratio between the signs consistent with one discourse and the signs not consistent with that discourse had to be 2:1. Furthermore, at least two of the nodal point and the China and Africa signs, understood as important signs closely connected to the nodal point, had to be from the same discourse. I allowed for only one of these to be from a different discourse with the condition that the third level of signs, i.e. the West, good governance and non-interference, is consistent with the discourse displayed by the other two of the nodal point and the important signs. This means that, while there are only 11 articles that fulfil these criteria, others still display meanings from the three international relations discourses, although combined with meanings from other discourses.

When trying to determine what other discourses are present in the material, the analysis was conducted in a way where first the meaning of the nodal point Sino-African development cooperation fixed in each article was identified. Afterwards the meanings of the signs surrounding the nodal point were analysed, on the basis of which a new discourse might be discovered. Having identified the meanings of the nodal point fixed in the remaining articles, two meanings that have not yet been elaborated on emerged: 1) a tool for economic development of Africa and 2) a positive contribution to good governance coming from China. The first of these meanings is displayed in four articles, while the second is found in two. In the following I am going to analyse these articles to see what meanings are articulated to the other signs around these two nodal points.

4.2.3.1. Meaning 1: “A tool for economic development of Africa”

4.2.3.1.1. Article analysis

The Sino-African development cooperation nodal point's meaning is fixed as a tool for economic development of Africa in four articles: three from *The Guardian* and one from *The Wall Street Journal*. The latest of these articles is an editorial published in *The Guardian* which suggests that what is written in it is the reflection of the opinion of the whole newspaper.

Already the titles of the two earlier articles in *The Guardian* suggest a positive change in the way China's role in Africa is conceived. Both of these articles were published in *The Guardian*'s “Comment is free” section and the titles read: “Why Africa welcomes the Chinese” and “China has a long record of helping Africa”. Starting with “Why Africa welcomes the Chinese” – written by Rwandan President Paul Kagame, published on 2 November 2009 -, we can say that the whole article is the justification of the Sino-African development cooperation that is seen as the way out of Africa's poverty, while in the first paragraph some of the claims of the previously discussed discourses are dismissed:

One argument is that Chinese investment is exploitative and undermines the development of democracy and human rights on the continent. Others view the matter in terms of competition, arguing that China is encroaching on the decades-long monopoly of the west over Africa's natural resources.

Neither of these viewpoints addresses the core issues.

Further on, the article explains that what is actually needed in Africa is “trade and investment [that] bring greater opportunity for wealth creation”, not aid that should “work itself out” and “be used to create opportunities for trade”. Put together with statements such as Africa “have not been able to trade fairly with Europe and the US”, this implies that trade with and investment from China is positive for African development and “provides the opportunity to improve millions of lives”. Here China's meaning is fixed as the real helper to Africa, while the West (Europe and the US) has “protected external markets from African products, hindering our ability to trade as equals”. Africa's meaning in this context is agency equal to that of other countries, Africans preferring “to work and provide for themselves, rather than

receive charity”, while they also develop markedly out of their own efforts: “we have worked hard to tackle the root causes of corruption and ensure there is a strong case for attracting investment. This programme of reform is yielding results”. In the conclusion of the article, the goal of the equitable trade partnership, proposed by the article and implied as being the case with China, is “sustainable development, mutual prosperity and respect”. Here the good governance element is lacking, although it is briefly addressed earlier in the article: trade and investment “need not be seen as a threat to the strengthening of democracy” and the “presence of Chinese investment in Africa does not discharge governments of their responsibilities any more than its presence in the EU or US should erode human rights”. Non-interference does not appear in the article.

The Guardian published the article “China has a long record of helping Africa” by Xiaoying Zhang more than a year later, on 11 December 2010. The article opens with the image of Chinese prime minister Wen Jiabao embracing a local chief while other African leaders look on, including the president of Ghana, according to the description of the photo. At the same time, the article addresses what it calls “western stereotype[s]”, just like we saw in the case of the previous article:

There is a western stereotype that sees China as a very aggressive newcomer, disregarding human rights and only being there for narrow national self-interest. China’s investment in Africa is often characterised as a plundering of mineral resources accompanied by neglect of the welfare of the local population. And the Chinese government has been criticised for not addressing the “reform agenda” seen as essential to Africa’s future stability and prosperity.

Is there any basis to these kinds of accusation? Not at all, in China’s view.

While this quote implies that it is only in China’s view that these accusations are baseless, the rest of the article speaks in a factual manner, not in a way that would suggest that what is said is only China’s opinion. The writer extensively cites China’s cooperation with Africa, including traditional aid, while activities of the West in Africa are not detailed. Instead, it is Western criticism of Chinese “assistance to countries with bad human rights records or governance problems” and of Chinese self-interest, that is addressed by the article. Among the answers to these criticisms two points have to be highlighted. First is the view that it is the African people who mostly benefit from Chinese projects. Here we can see the divide in the meaning of Africa between the people and the leadership familiar from the liberal

internationalist discourse: “Is it moral to leave African people in dire poverty because of their bad governments?”. Second, is the questioning of the West’s own record in Africa: “when has the west ever thought that free trade was harmful for Africa?”, implying that the West is not free from self-interest, while China, although admitting that it will “protect its own interests through trade and investment”, is not believed to “colonise Africa because China understands the humiliation of colonisation from its own experience”. Therefore, while the Sino-African development cooperation’s meaning is fixed as “cooperation” that has “benefited [...] the African people” and the sign *China* gets the meaning of the one who “has helped Africa develop”, the meaning of Africa is more ambiguous. A chain of equivalence is created between China and Africa as those who endured colonisation and thus share an experience, at the same time Africa’s meaning is divided as mentioned above, while China and Africa “support [...] each other politically”, exemplified by “its African friends” voting “China into the United Nations”, which can remind us to the political blocs of the political realist discourse. In this article, the West is seen to not benefit Africa as much as China, while the enhancement of good governance championed by the West is somewhat overlooked when it comes to the development of Africa and poverty reduction. Non-interference does not feature.

Two months after the publication of this article, on 19 February 2011 *The Guardian* ran an editorial entitled “A fresh chapter is opening in Africa’s history” that contrasts the way the media portrayed Africa in the past as a continent battered by “poverty, famine, pestilence, corruption, drought, Aids and war” with the way Africa is growing at present. The main point of this editorial is the change taking place in Africa as “a whole new Africa [is] taking place” with the qualities of “confidence, action, self-assertion, impatience, innovation, determination – and success”. The new growth of Africa, also exemplified by statistics, is partly attributed to China: “[w]here the west once came to the aid of Africa, it is now China [...] which is investing in the continent”. This article, however, further points out that this investment is not without a price: it is “in return for access to the continent’s minerals. Notwithstanding this, the editorial asserts that the Chinese are still more welcome, as Africa feels “grateful for the huge amount of money that will help their own economic recovery”, than the West who is “not best placed to lecture Africa on what is in its best interest” and who has been “slow to adjust to the rise of an Africa empowered by economic growth”. Therefore we can again see that the Sino-African development cooperation is “changing the face of Africa” advancing Africa’s economic development, with Africa given the meaning of the “new, dynamic continent” and China being the aid of Africa’s dynamic. Meanwhile the West, though having positive

intentions, is slow in reacting to the new circumstances and thus might not be very useful to Africa's development: as singer-campaigner Bono is quoted, we the West better "start telling these stories [of the new African dynamic], and if we can't tell these stories, then at least let's get out of the way of these stories". Non-interference does not appear in the editorial, neither does good governance; it is only corruption and lack of transparency that features which, while plagues Africa, does not avoid the West either.

Finally, *The Wall Street Journal's* "IMF lifts Africa growth view" – written by Sarah Childress, published on 26 October 2010 - talks about China's positive involvement in African growth. The positive effect of Chinese trade is already established in the subtitle "Trade with China, other developing economies provides a Sub-Saharan boost", although China's resource-hungriness and Africa's "mineral wealth" also receives emphasis throughout the article, with repeated references to oil and China's "exchange [of] infrastructure for minerals". However, these infrastructure projects are essential "to Africa's growth and help it lure investors to other sectors". Africa is on a "growth trend" thanks to, among others, the "marked shift toward trade with resource-hungry China", thus the Sino-African development cooperation. China's meaning in this article is fixed in a twofold way: on the one hand, it is advancing African growth, but, on the other hand, a relatively big emphasis (compared to the three articles in *The Guardian*) is put on its hunger for resources that would possibly fit the political realist or the world system discourses better. Africa similarly can be understood also not just as the continent of new growth but also as a continent of vast natural resources. Meanwhile, Europe and the US, although still trading with and investing in Africa heavily, "are struggling to recover from the global slump". Good governance and non-interference do not feature in the article.

4.2.3.1.2. The economic development discourse

Having thoroughly examined the four articles that fix the meaning of the Sino-African development cooperation as a tool of economic development of Africa, we can now elaborate on what meanings the other signs in these articles get and whether it can be said that these signs form a definite discourse around the nodal point the Sino-African development

cooperation meaning a tool of African economic development⁸. Let's look at the meanings of each sign as they are fixed in the articulations of these articles.

China's meaning in the first article in *The Guardian* is fixed as the state that helps Africa develop, providing an opportunity to improve the life of the African people through help. The second *The Guardian* article reinforces the meaning of helper. Moreover, it adds the meaning created by the chain of equivalence between Africa and China based on their past history: both are former colonies and as such have a common shared experience that makes China more trustworthy, more unlikely to "colonise" Africa. However, a further meaning that appears in this article – although one that is not stressed – is familiar from the political realist discourse and could be explained as a consequence of the overflow of meaning of the sign China: a possibility of political influence and bloc voting. The editorial from *The Guardian* stresses China's meaning as the supporter of the new African economic dynamic. Here we can observe the appearance of mineral resources again; however, it is not directly evident whether it is related to either the political realist discourse or the world system discourse. It could be argued that the influence of meaning comes from both of these discourses: "China stands accused by some of conducting a new colonial war, ripping the mineral heart out of Africa" ("A fresh chapter", 2011). The "new colonial war" can be a reference to competition for power with other, Western powers, while "ripping the mineral heart" and "colonial" suggests the meaning of oppressor from the world system discourse. However, this meaning is not as emphasised as the prevailing meaning of China as the investor into Africa's new development. Finally, *The Wall Street Journal's* article talks about China's as well as other developing countries' role in advancing Africa's growth, while also mentioning China's hunger for resources; here again it is not obvious whether this mention is related to any of the other discourses. Over the four articles, the meaning of China is consistently fixed as the state helping Africa's economic development, while references are made at China's resource hunger that can be an indication of the influence of other discourses.

Similarly, in the case of the Africa sign there is a main meaning present in all four articles: the economic development. Besides this, we can observe the counterparts of the additional

⁸ As indicated in the introductory chapter, the term „development cooperation“ consists of foreign aid and commercial activity. Two of the articles analysed in this section make a clear distinction between the value of aid and trade/investment for Africa's development. „Why Africa welcomes the Chinese“ places aid in a secondary position in the sense that it should create the proper foundations for trade and investment. Furthermore, aid should be decreased because it creates dependency. „A fresh chapter is opening in Africa's history“ acknowledges the „urgent need for aid“ but this is only „in the short term“ with the growing dynamic of Africa.

meanings found in the case of the China signs. In the chain of equivalence, found in the second article in *The Guardian*, Africa and China are equated on the basis of a shared past. When China's political bloc creation is mentioned it is Africa for whose votes in the United Nations a competition might unfold. And in the case of China's hunger for resources Africa is the continent "with the largest reserve of untapped mineral wealth" ("A fresh chapter", 2011) that is competed for in a political realist discourse or that is exploited in the world system discourse. However, as mentioned above in the case of China, these additional meanings are not as significant as the meaning of economic development and growth.

The meaning of the West is fixed in two ways in the analysed articles. First, in "Why Africa welcomes the Chinese" and "China has a long record of helping Africa" we can see a self-interested West that does not treat African states equally, does not trade fairly with them and the free trade promoted by the West is implied to be "harmful for Africa" (Xiaoying, 2010). Thus there is a clear difference between the West and China; the latter, while not being exempt from self-interest, is still treated more positively than the West because of the equivalence created between it and Africa (both have experienced colonisation and as such would be sympathetic towards each other) or because China's conduct in Africa, while self-interested, is seen as benefitting Africa, as explained also in "A fresh chapter is opening in Africa's history". The second meaning of the West seems to question the economic competence of the West: it either is slow to react to the changes happening in Africa and as such would be left out ("there is a new train leaving the station in Africa – and we had better climb on board or it will leave without us" ("A fresh chapter", 2011)), as in "A fresh chapter is opening in Africa's history", or is struggling to recover from the financial crisis while Africa's growth is "better-than-expected" (Childress, 2010), as in "IMF lifts Africa growth view". In these instances, Africa's accelerating development is contrasted with that of the West. As we can see, there is no univocal meaning fixed for the West overarching all the four articles. However, it also has to be said that – with the exception of "Why Africa welcomes the Chinese" that can be understood as a justification for Africa's close relationship with China but also as a critique of Western aid practices – the West as a sign does not get a big significance in these articles.

While non-interference does not feature in any of these four articles and good governance does not appear significantly either, it is important to consider the problem of good governance in more detail here. While it can be said that good governance is not emphasised

in either the political realist discourse or the world system discourse, there is a difference between the way these gloss over the problem of good governance by not even mentioning it, and the way it is articulated in the articles analysed in this section. The essence in the latter case is evident in “Why Africa welcomes the Chinese”: China is not “a threat to the strengthening of democracy” and “what should be our common goal [is]: sustainable development, mutual prosperity and respect” (Kagame, 2009). While the importance of good governance is acknowledged, it becomes only secondary to other considerations, such as development or poverty reduction. This is advocated in “China has a long record of helping Africa” too as the article questions the morality of leaving people in poverty, not investing in, trading with or providing aid to African countries just because of their bad governments. As mentioned earlier, “A fresh chapter is opening in Africa’s history” talks about the problems of corruption that is of “no benefit [...] to the ordinary citizens” (“A fresh chapter”, 2011) but does not even touch upon human rights violations or anti-democratic practices for example, while *The Wall Street Journal* article does not refer to this aspect at all.

To sum up, around the nodal point of Sino-African development cooperation understood as a tool for Africa’s economic development the following discursive patterns could be identified in the four articles analysed above. We can say that in general China’s meaning is fixed as the benefactor of the African economic development and Africa gets the meaning of new economic dynamic, while the meaning of the West is ambivalent. As explained, the West is either seen as self-interested in a more negative way than China, or failing in its economic realm. What both of these meanings achieve in the end is highlighting how China is better fitted as the benefactor of African growth than the West, quite contrary to the liberal internationalist discourse. Furthermore, good governance’s meaning in these articles is fixed as secondary to economic considerations such as poverty reduction and development. On the basis of these meanings overarching all four of the articles a new discourse is discernible, one that would be called the economic development discourse in the ensuing parts of this thesis.

Just as we could see that the three discourses built on international relations schools could affect the articles that mainly display this economic development discourse, we can connect the latter discourse to the articles exhibiting the other discourses. As highlighted earlier in the analysis, “So what are the Chinese up to in Africa?” – the article used in this analysis to show how the liberal internationalist discourse appears – articulated a meaning to the West that did not fit in the liberal internationalist discourse: namely failure and the possibility to learn from

China's practices. This can be connected to the meaning of the West in the economic development discourse as failing in the economic realm, as well as, to the meaning of China as the real benefactor of Africa's development. These meanings can be perceived as being a contradicting alternative to the meanings in the liberal internationalist discourse and thus having an influence on the latter meanings.

4.2.3.2. Meaning 2: “A positive contribution to good governance from China”

4.2.3.2.1. Article analysis

As mentioned earlier, two articles fix the meaning of the Sino-African development cooperation as a positive contribution to good governance coming from China, both of which were published by *The Guardian*.

The first of these articles, entitled “China looks to British experience for African expansion”, written by Tania Branigan and Julian Borger, dates back to 21 May 2009 and elaborates on the challenges Chinese businesses face as they expand their activities in Africa. While the liberal internationalist assertion is repeated through quoting Amnesty International that the Chinese presence in African states is not helpful to or is even worsening the human rights situation, what seems to be at odds with any of the previously analysed articles is the picture of China as a cautious and wary actor in Africa when it comes to international standards. China in this narrative grew “anxi[ous] over its reputation in Africa” and is trying to avoid “the abuses and mistakes committed by former colonial powers”. To this end, the Chinese present in Africa – “embassies and companies” – have been directed to “forge closer links to local communities”. Furthermore, there is also a commencing “partnership with Britain’s department for international development (Dfid), intended to monitor and control the social and environmental impact of Chinese investment”. In this narrative, China, although still causing tension with its activity in Africa, tries to remedy the damages it might have caused. This, however, is not out of China’s pure goodwill but in a self-interested manner out of its fear for its reputation. Therefore, we can say that China’s meaning in this instance is fixed as a state that somewhat reluctantly keeps itself to social standards. However reluctant this action is though, it is still viewed as positive because it shows a development in China’s stance. Africa’s meaning in this article can be seen as relating to previously discussed discourses, such as the liberal internationalist discourse through the mention of “hugely

corrupt and oppressive governments” or the economic development discourse through the assertion that China invests increasingly in Africa because the latter is seen as “the best refuge for sunstroke prevention from the financial crisis” or “the last golden land”. What could be viewed as a meaning independent from the other discourses might be the “resentment” of the African people against the negatively perceived Chinese practices. This, fuelled by China’s non-interference policy that leads to a negative perception of China, contributes to China’s embracement of standards that can improve the state of good governance of African countries. Therefore, good governance is perceived as important even if it is out of Chinese self-interest. The West is well-placed to assist China in its newfound responsibility and thus to indirectly benefit the African people. Interestingly, being “former colonial powers” here is not necessarily viewed as negative, as it gives the West an experience that it can learn from and that it can use to educate China.

Half a year later, on 19 October 2009, *The Guardian* published “What is China doing in Guinea?” from Chris Alden. This article refers to many meanings from different discourses, such as China’s hunger for resources “re-ignit[ing] western fears” or China’s “continued commitment towards Africa” creating a “positive development message” while Western countries have to “reneg[e] on their aid commitments” because of their difficulties due to the financial crisis. However, one common theme with the previous article is the “Chinese business’s growing wariness in operating in African environment” and its “respon[se] to international »sensitivities«”. Out of the latter concern it is mentioned that China cancelled a deal with the autocratic Guinea. While isolating states like Guinea can mean support against regimes abusing human rights, again this happens not out of China’s benevolence but out of its own interest to keep up its “positive development message” that a deal with Guinea would threaten. Similarly to the previous article, China here is viewed as acting reluctantly in response to international fears. One push again comes from some of the African states as related to China’s wariness to lose its attractiveness to stable countries. This creates a divide in the meaning of Africa not just between oppressive regimes and their victims, but also between “western-designated »pariahs«”, with whom China forged relationships before, and other African states where China seeks “stable, long-term relationships” at present. In this context, good governance gains importance out of Chinese interests, while the meaning of the West is more influenced by the liberal internationalist and economic development discourses. Non-interference does not appear in this article.

4.2.3.2.2. Reluctant cooperation discourse?

As we have done in the case of the economic development discourse, in this instance of the nodal point as a positive contribution to good governance coming from China we have to look at each sign's meaning in the analysed articles to see whether there is correspondence between them, forming a specific discourse. Unlike the case of the economic development discourse however, there does not seem to be a conclusive consistency between the meanings of the signs in the instance of the two articles analysed above.

Besides the meaning of the nodal point as an activity that results in a positive contribution towards good governance, it is most probably the meanings of the China and good governance signs that are the most consistent between the two articles. While it is true that the meaning of China is influenced by the other discourses, especially in the second article, the main meaning that appears in both of the articles is that of a wary and anxious player in Africa that is reluctantly willing to act in favour of good governance to save its own reputation. This stance could be described shortly as self-interested compliance with international standards. This self-interest gives good governance importance, although not such a huge importance as in the liberal internationalist discourse but still a bigger one than in the economic development discourse. This importance does not come from the recognition of the Western value system but from China's fear of losing the reputation we can be familiar with from the economic development discourse. This is evidenced by such utterances as, "[i]n an apparent reflection of Chinese anxiety over its reputation in Africa" (Branigan & Borger, 2009), "it was responding to international »sensitivities«" (Alden, 2009) or "this news from Guinea threatens to crowd out the positive development message that the Chinese government believes is overwhelmingly the case with China's engagement in other parts of the continent" (Alden, 2009). On the other hand, there is no evidence in the texts that China would acknowledge the value of good governance in itself.

It is more problematic to find correspondence between the meanings of the other signs. In the case of the Africa sign we could see meanings from the other discourses present. What seems to be common in the two articles concerning Africa is the sense that some of the influence that forces China to care about good governance comes from Africa: either from the African people, as in the first article ("resentment was building up in some places" (Branigan & Borger, 2009), "this does produce some social tension and even violence between Chinese

and Africans” (Branigan & Borger, 2009), or from the stable African countries China tries to build a firm relationship with, as in the second article (“it was responding to international »sensitivities« - assumed to be the African Union’s deep unease” (Alden, 2009), “today China no longer seeks new African markets as much as stable, long-term relationships”(Alden, 2009)). Therefore, it is possible to perceive Africa’s meaning in these contexts to be fixed as the source of China’s newfound interest in good governance.

The meanings of the West and non-interference do not correspond in the two articles. The first article fixes the meaning of the West as a power that has learnt from its colonialist past and uses its knowledge positively to influence the state of good governance of African states, although indirectly through China. In this case we can observe a rare sense of cooperation between the West and China. While this meaning could be considered as specific to the Sino-African development cooperation nodal point understood as a positive contribution towards good governance, a meaning different from those in the other discourses, this does not get reasserted in the second article. Indeed the latter only repeats meanings from the previously discussed discourses. Meanwhile the meaning of non-interference in the first article is unambiguous in the sense that it leads to a negative perception of China’s presence in Africa. This could be related to the liberal internationalist discourse, but also has its logical place around the Sino-African development cooperation nodal point as understood in this context. However, non-interference does not appear in the second article which does not reaffirm the meaning from the first article.

On the basis of the two articles analysed, it seems that there is a discourse at play here. While it is elaborate in the case of “China looks to British experience for African expansion”, it is more mixed with the other discourses in the second article. This, coupled with the lack of other articles articulating similar meanings, makes it more difficult to identify it as a “fully-grown” discourse. Hence the question-mark in the title of this section. Nevertheless in the following it will be treated as a separate discourse where China’s meaning would be that of an actor growing anxious in its dealings in Africa and complying with international standards because of its own interests. Africa’s meaning I would base on the loose connection between the two articles as the factor behind China’s new interest in good governance because of the resentment building up in Africa. Good governance is taken to mean the standard that is aimed at, but with the addition that its importance derives from China’s interests. As the meanings of the West and non-interference do not correspond in the two articles and because

new meanings for these signs appear in the first article, rather than in the second, the former meanings would be taken as the ones articulated in this separate discourse. Thus, the West would be understood as indirectly helping good governance in Africa, possibly including its lessons learnt from its colonialist past, while non-interference would mean a principle causing negative perceptions of China. The discourse built up of these meanings I would refer to as the reluctant cooperation discourse.

Having established the discourses at play and showed how they unfold in some of the newspaper articles in the material and how they might influence each other, now it is time to elaborate on the material in general and discuss the issues of struggle, antagonism and objectivity.

4.3. Second research question: does one discourse dominate or is there struggle?

As mentioned earlier, the material consists of 21 articles out of which 11 could be categorized as belonging to either the liberal internationalist or the political realist or the world system discourse on the basis of the requirements outlined above. Out of these 11 articles, five qualify as liberal internationalist, four as political realist and two as displaying world system discourse. Adding to these 11 articles come other four manifesting the economic development discourse and one articulating the reluctant cooperation discourse⁹. While these numbers might seem small, the liberal internationalist, the political realist and the economic development discourses each amount to approximately one-fifth of the material, while the five discourses make up more than 75 percent of the sample. It can be said that the remaining articles display a mix of these five discourses.

When assessing the discourses according to the newspapers they were published in, we have to say that interestingly there was no newspaper that consistently published one discourse. Similarly most of the discourses appeared across the newspapers, the exception being the reluctant cooperation discourse; both articles that articulated at least some meanings from this discourse appeared in *The Guardian*. It was *The New York Times* that stuck to one discourse the most, namely to the liberal internationalist discourse, although one of the mixed discourse articles was from *The New York Times*, mixing the political realist and economic development

⁹ Here I refer to the article entitled „China looks to British experience for African expansion”. As said before, „What is China doing in Guinea?” counts as an article with mixed discourses, compared to the former.

discourses. This feature of *The New York Times*, however, could possibly be explainable by the small number of articles from it in the material – it is easier to achieve consistency across only a few articles. Similar could be said about the reluctant cooperation discourse: the small number of articles in the material displaying this discourse might be one factor that accounts for it being only present in one of the analysed newspapers. Likewise, it is *The Guardian* that showed the biggest divergence displaying multiple articles from all discourses; again, this might be explained by the large amount of articles taken from *The Guardian* accounting for nearly half of the sample.

These observations can already indicate that we cannot talk about a hegemonic discourse across the material. To further elaborate on the issues of objectivity and struggle over meaning, however, we have to continue with the help of discourse theory.

It is useful to remind ourselves of the key concepts of discourse theory here. As signs are overflowed with meaning, the same reality can be understood in different ways, meaning can be attempted to be fixed differently in different discourses. This induces conflict and struggle between potential meanings and discourses. Mutually exclusive meanings are called antagonism that can be overcome by hegemonic intervention. Successful hegemonic intervention results in naturalising one articulation over the others thus creating objectivity, a “dominance of one particular perspective” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 7).

4.3.1. Struggle and antagonism

It is easy to see that among the meanings articulated in the five discourses identified in this analysis there exist multiple contradicting meanings, that is, there is struggle. Among the relatively large number of discourses in the analysis, it is possible that meanings from a discourse contradict more with meanings from one discourse than with another – and vice versa, it is possible that the meanings from a discourse are more similar to meanings in one discourse than to another. Therefore, there can be overlaps between meanings from different discourses, and also between the discourses themselves. Thus the possibility arises, in the researcher’s opinion, that antagonism occurs at different levels in the material. These can be the level of individual signs, the level of discourses or even the level of clusters of discourses. Now the task is to consider where we can perceive antagonism that could be a stepping stone towards hegemony.

4.3.1.1. Level of signs

When looking at the meanings of the China and the West signs, we can see two discursive patterns in the material. While in the political realist discourse both of these meanings are fixed as competitors of each other and in the world system discourse as powers from the core exploiting the periphery, thus creating an equivalence between China and the West, in the liberal internationalist and economic development discourses the meanings of China and the West are fixed on different ends of the scale. In the liberal internationalist discourse, the West is the helper of African good governance and China is the one who tries to expand non-democratic values, while in the economic development discourse it is China who is seen as the benefactor of Africa as opposed to the West. Furthermore, the meaning of China varies among the discourses between a more negative (especially in the liberal internationalist and the world system discourses) and a more positive (economic development and reluctant cooperation discourses) stance. The difference between a positive and negative understanding is also observable in the case of the West: the former value is attached to it in the case of the liberal internationalist discourse and possibly the reluctant cooperation discourse, while the latter in the case of the world system and economic development discourses. While some of the meanings might not be mutually exclusive, as it is possible for China and the West to be competitors of each other and exploit the peripheral Africa or spread different values at the same time, other meanings cannot possibly be conceivable together. Such are, for example, that China exploits Africa and that its activities lead to or benefit the African growth; or that China spreads non-democratic values and that at the same time it increasingly complies with international sensibilities when it comes to oppressive regimes.

The meanings of Africa too show a wide variety in the material. While these meanings at first do not look so contradicting, there is a significant conflict. The discourses derived from the international relations schools treat Africa without agency: Africa's meaning is fixed as an object to compete for, or as victims to be helped, rogue leaders to overcome, or periphery to be exploited. This is the opposite of the economic development and reluctant cooperation discourses: these view Africans as actors, working for new growth or resenting the way they are treated by China and thus fostering a change in China's practices. While the difference in the perception of African agency might not create mutual exclusivity, the struggle is notable.

In the case of good governance we can again see a polarisation. On the one hand there are the discourses that downplay the importance of good governance. Here we can mention specifically the political realist and world system discourses that do not even articulate this sign¹⁰. On the other end of the scale there is the liberal internationalist discourse. In between these discourses lie the economic development discourse, that can be viewed as being closer to the former two discourses in that it downplays good governance by making it secondary to other considerations, and the reluctant cooperation discourse, that views good governance as important but not because of its own merit but because of its use for China's interests.

4.3.1.2. Level of discourses

As we could see, struggle, mutually exclusive as well as not, appears across the meanings in the discourses. Our task is now to look at the level of discourses and see if some of these are mutually exclusive. As antagonism arises from mutually exclusive articulations of which articulations results the fixation of meaning, the researcher proposes here to look at the meanings of the signs again. If multiple signs between two discourses appear to be mutually exclusive, then it is possible that the discourses themselves are mutually exclusive with each other as well, thus being antagonistic.

When looking at the signs of the discourses, the primary focus is going to be at the nodal point and the important signs of China and Africa. On this basis we can see two possible pairs of antagonistic discourses. On the one hand there are the two discourses that are concerned with the social aspect of the Sino-African relationship: the liberal internationalist and the reluctant cooperation discourses. On the other hand, a pair of mutually exclusive discourses emphasise the economic facet of the relations: the world system and the economic development discourses. The political realist discourse's emphasis on the natural conflict between states seems to place it in a somewhat neutral position.

First, the liberal internationalist and the reluctant cooperation discourses fix the meaning of the Sino-African development cooperation nodal point in contradicting ways that exclude each other. While in the understanding of the liberal internationalist discourse this

¹⁰ While the political realist discourse would be expected to mention non-interference in a neutral or even positive stance on the basis of the basic understandings of political realism as explained in the methodology chapter, there is no evidence to this in the material. This issue will be brought up further on in this chapter.

development cooperation is a hindrance to the spread of good governance in Africa, the reluctant cooperation discourse points towards an understanding where China, even if not happily, but cooperates with other actors to bring about positive change in the state of good governance in Africa. Accordingly, the former discourse fixes the meaning of China as the state that is set to expand non-democratic values, while in the latter China is forced by its interests to comply with the international standards and sensitivities. When it comes to the meaning of Africa, the mutual exclusivity is not that straightforward. The African resentment in the reluctant cooperation discourse could conceivably appear in the liberal internationalist discourse that splits the meaning of Africa into rogue leadership and its victims. The resentment of the victims of a rogue regime, that also receives support from China, is easily imaginable. What could make these meanings mutually exclusive is the perception of agency, as mentioned above. While in the idealist discourse Africa is viewed without agency, in the reluctant cooperation discourse agency of the resenting Africans is central in bringing about change in China's stance.

Therefore, we can say that the nodal point and the China and Africa signs are indeed mutually exclusive when comparing the liberal internationalist and the reluctant cooperation discourses. This cannot be said about the rest of the signs. In the understanding of the former, the West is the helper of Africa in advancing good governance and in the case of the reluctant cooperation discourse the West helps indirectly through China. Even the meaning of the West in "What is China doing in Guinea?", the article mixing the reluctant cooperation discourse with other discourses, is not mutually exclusive with that in the liberal internationalist discourse. This article perceives the West similarly to the economic development discourse, emphasising the West's economic problems, but this does not mean that the West does not advance good governance in Africa. Furthermore, both of the discourses considered here view good governance as important and non-interference as negative.

While the meanings of the less significant signs do not constitute a mutually exclusive alternative to each other, we can still consider the two discourses antagonistic on the basis of the nodal point and the China and Africa signs. An important observation here concerns the number of articles that display these discourses and the timing of these articles. As said earlier, the liberal internationalist discourse featured in the biggest number of articles, notably five. In contrast, the reluctant cooperation discourse was the main discourse in only one article, while being mixed with other discourses in one more article. Moreover, these latter

articles were published in 2009, the first year of the period of this present analysis. As antagonism can be resolved through hegemonic intervention to arrive at objectivity according to Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory, it is possible that here we can observe a move from antagonism to objectivity, with the quasi disappearance of the reluctant cooperation discourse and the naturalisation of the liberal internationalist discourse, at least when it comes to the social aspect of Sino-African relations. However, because of the short time frame of the research this can not be verified.

Secondly, we have to consider the world system and the economic development discourses. While the former fixes the meaning of the nodal point Sino-African development cooperation as an exploitative relationship between a core state and the periphery, the latter discourse understands the nodal point as being a tool for economic development in Africa. These two meanings are not compatible with each other. Similarly, the meanings attached to China are not compatible either: it is not possible to be a quasi colonialist power exploiting the peripheral Africa and be the biggest contributor to the African economic development at the same time. Africa's meanings as the exploited periphery and the developing economic dynamic are mutually exclusive as well. However, while in the world system discourse the West is a capable power exploiting Africa besides China, the economic development discourse is ambiguous about the meaning of the West. As mentioned earlier, one of the ways the meaning of the West is fixed emphasises its self-interested conduct without regard to Africa's economy. This meaning is similar to the one in the world system discourse. The second understanding questions the West's economic competence, which looks more contradicting to the world system discourse. However, neither of the discourses features the sign non-interference, and while the world system discourse does not talk about good governance either, the economic development discourse places good governance in a secondary position that can act as downplaying its importance, just like the world system discourse does effectively.

In the case of these two discourses we can again see a mutual exclusivity in the instance of the nodal point and the China and Africa signs. However, here we cannot observe a similar trend to that of the reluctant cooperation discourse. Although the world system discourse characterises only two articles and appears mixed in one more article¹¹, these articles are

¹¹ The mutual exclusivity of the world system and economic development discourses can also be highlighted by the fact that none of the mixed articles feature both of these discourses. They do not mix with each other.

spread across the material when it comes to time scale. Similarly, the economic development discourse is the main discourse in four articles and is mixed in one, but these appear in all three years of the time frame. Therefore, while in the case of the liberal internationalist and reluctant cooperation discourses it was possible to talk about the probability of a formulating objectivity, when it comes to world system and economic development discourses antagonism is not resolved yet through a hegemonic intervention.

4.3.1.3. Level of clusters of discourses

Having discussed the level of discourses, we can turn our attention to the third level of antagonism that the researcher termed clusters¹². But to be able to talk about clusters of discourses, we have to refer back to the level of signs. There we elaborated on contradicting meanings, some of which were mutually exclusive but appeared in more than one discourse. These created parallels between discourses, generating discursive patterns that allow us to talk about clusters of discourses.

First, the nodal point Sino-African development cooperation is understood as disadvantageous from a Western viewpoint in the discourses based on the international relations schools. Even the political realist discourses, that views competition as natural, looks at the relationship between China and Africa from a Western point of view in the material, which results in a negative view of it. This negativity is opposed to the economic development and reluctant cooperation discourses that perceive the Sino-African relationship as one that is good for Africa. The perception of China is similarly divided between the discourses: the former three being reminiscent of Mawdsley's observation of "Chinese ruthlessness" (2008, 517), China being the competitor of the West in many ways – for the spread of values, for power and influence and for the exploitation of the African resources -, while the latter two emphasising the positive role China plays on the continent. A further correspondence is observable between Mawdsley's results and the three discourses built on international relations schools. Mawdsley found a general pattern of "African weakness" and de-emphasised agency (2008,

¹² While Laclau and Mouffe do not talk about clusters of discourses, Jørgensen and Phillips explains that the demarcation of discourses as analytical concepts originates from the researcher, as elaborated on earlier (see p. 26). On this basis it is possible to demarcate discourses in different orders of discourses. Therefore, what here is termed clusters of discourses are themselves part of a wider order of discourse than the order of discourse of the consequences of the Sino-African development cooperation analysed in the course of the present chapter. This wider order of discourse is based on the divide between confrontation and cooperation in Africa between the American and European powers and the PRC.

517). The lack of agency returns in the material of the present paper, as explained earlier, in the case of the liberal internationalist, political realist and world system discourses. Contrary to that, the economic development and reluctant cooperation discourses focus on the African agency.

On the basis of the nodal point and these two signs, we could talk about two clusters of discourses: one comprising of the three international relations discourses and one comprising of the other two. To connect back to the level of discourses, we can see here, that while the liberal internationalist discourse belongs to the first cluster, the reluctant discourse is linked to the second. The same can be said about the conflict of the world system and economic development discourses. The importance of the level of clusters is underscored by the leader and the editorial articles in the material. The leader “We must compete for respect in Africa” shows that the three discourses based on international relations theory might struggle with each other to ascribe meaning; however, they can also live together, be mixed with each other, are compatible with each other. Meanwhile, the editorial “A fresh chapter is opening in Africa’s history” is a typical example displaying the economic cooperation discourse, showing its separateness and importance.

However, as it was the case on the level of discourses, the three signs deemed less important do not align to create overarching discursive patterns. Therefore, while only looking at the nodal point and the China and Africa signs we could see mutual exclusivity between the two clusters of discourses, the West, good governance and non-interference signs blunt this exclusivity. Therefore, it does not seem likely that one cluster of discourses would be completely excluded as alternative meaning. Even if the reluctant cooperation discourse would disappear, the second cluster would probably still be kept up by the economic development discourse that is growing in significance as evidenced by its incorporation into the aforementioned editorial, questioning the objectivity of the discursive patterns articulated by the first cluster. The lack of naturalisation and objectivity means the continuance of politics, understood by Laclau and Mouffe as “what is contested” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 36).

4.3.2. Objectivity

Having talked about struggle and antagonism at length, hegemony and objectivity deserve a mention as well. Although we said that there is no sedimented discourse or discursive pattern (cluster) in the material, it is still possible to find one example of objectivity on the level of signs. This is the case of the non-interference sign. In the material, non-interference appears as a negative concept, as in the liberal internationalist or reluctant cooperation discourse, or does not appear at all, as in the remaining three discourses¹³. This is despite the fact that political realism perceives non-interference as natural in the international world order, a principle to be followed. Furthermore, it is possible to imagine that non-interference would be understood even more positively, for example in relation to the economic development discourse: interference into domestic affairs could be perceived negatively in light of the West's past colonialism and thus China's non-interference could be viewed as allowing African states to follow their own development paths. However, these two possibilities do not appear in the material. It seems natural that non-interference is negative, although alternative understandings are possible. The alternative meanings are antagonistic to the meaning observed in the material, they are mutually exclusive. The antagonism is, however, already resolved in this case: the alternative meanings are excluded, they are not articulated at all. Therefore the negative meaning of non-interference is naturalised, it has become something we view as objective.

¹³ Some articles, such as "Will China deliver to Africa where Europe failed?", mention that the non-interference policy is a fallacy, that China does attach some strings to its development cooperation. However, these strings are not of positive value to Africa or the West, such as extra-territoriality, adding negative meaning to non-interference.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Summary of results

To conclude the present thesis paper, let us first examine the findings of the research. Two research questions were asked: the first relating to the existing discourses in the material concerning the Sino-African development cooperation, the second considering the relationship between these discourses, i.e. whether there is objectivity or struggle over particular meanings.

Before the analysis, the expectation was to find three discourses in the material on the basis of Hattori's (2001, 634) observations. Using a methodology based on Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory these three discourses – the liberal internationalist, the political realist and the world system discourses – were indeed identified in the material. However, because of relatively large amount of articles, that did not display the meanings associated with the three discourses and as such could not be categorised, further inquiry into the material was required.

What the analysis found was that two other discourses existed in the material: what I termed as the economic development and the reluctant cooperation discourses. While the economic development discourse was especially accentuated because of the number of articles displaying this discourse – including an editorial -, the reluctant cooperation discourse featured in just two articles that might not seem very significant, it nonetheless offered an interesting insight into the workings of antagonism and objectivity.

The importance of these two latter discourses relates especially to the second research question. In the case of just the three discourses based on international relations theory we could have only spoken about struggle on the level of discourses and signs and objectivity on the level of signs, whereas the introduction of the economic development and the reluctant cooperation discourses allowed the researcher to talk about antagonism and objectivity on the level higher than the level of signs.

Examining all five discourses it could be established that there exists antagonism on the level of discourses as well as on what we termed the level of clusters of discourses. The two

clusters of discourses basically encompass the pairs of antagonistic discourses, with the addition of the political realist discourse to the cluster of discourses based on international relations theory. What the two clusters represent is the divide between Mawdsley's findings and their opposites. While the cluster of liberal internationalist, political realist and world system discourses more or less stands for the "African weakness, Western trusteeship and Chinese ruthlessness" (Mawdsley, 2008, 517), the cluster of economic development and reluctant cooperation discourses presents a new facet, one that talks about African agency to decide over their faith, Western economic weakness and possibly inclination to cooperate with China in helping Africa, and Chinese willingness to develop Africa. The significance of these clusters is symbolized in that the two important articles in the material – the leader "We must compete for respect in Africa" and the editorial "A fresh chapter is opening in Africa's history" – represent the two clusters. The former mixes the three discourses from the cluster based on international relations theory, while the latter being of the economic development discourse¹⁴. What is more, both of these articles having been published by *The Guardian* shows that even within the same newspaper there is no consensus over which cluster of discourses is to prevail. The two clusters are in a discursive struggle and antagonism to ascribe meaning to the same social phenomenon. The multiple opinions on the examined topic highlights the importance of such an analysis as there is no dominant view on how to understand the place of China and the Western powers in Africa in relation to each other.

5.2. Relevance of findings

What gives the significance of these findings is the different possible ways of action that the different discourses and clusters of discourses require (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 9). As Jørgensen and Phillips (2002, 145) explain,

the discourses, by representing reality in one particular way rather than in other possible ways, constitute subjects and objects in particular ways, create boundaries between the true and the false,

¹⁴ The editorial "A fresh chapter is opening in Africa's history" lacks the reluctant cooperation discourse. As mentioned earlier, there is the possibility to perceive the antagonism between this discourse and the liberal internationalist discourse as one which is turning into objectivity with the exclusion of the reluctant cooperation discourse. Nonetheless the second cluster of discourses seems to be "kept alive" by the economic development discourse, which seems more influential over the world system discourse in the antagonism between these two discourses, on the basis of the number of articles displaying these discourses. However, on the basis of this material and time frame it is a too far-reaching conclusion to say that the world system discourse is going to be excluded by the economic development discourse in the future.

and make certain types of action relevant and others unthinkable. It is in this sense that discourse is constitutive of the social.

Embracing the first cluster comprising of the liberal internationalist, the political realist and the world system discourses entails a confrontational stance towards China from British and American policy makers. This line of thinking would understand China as a competitor on the African continent and as such the Sino-African development cooperation would be deemed undesirable. This confrontational line would be in correlation with the China threat theory that by constructing the PRC as the new international relations adversary poses, as Mawdsley posits, a great threat to international peace (2008, 522-523).

It is, of course, possible that the confrontation flowing from this cluster of discourse would be muted by different arguments based on different discourses in different orders of discourses. Furthermore, the three distinct discourses within this cluster result in different confrontations, as noted in the analysis chapter. The liberal internationalist discourse leads to confrontation in the spread of values, the political realist discourse to confrontation for interest and power, the world system discourse to confrontation in the exploitation of peripheral Africa. These confrontations have different significance and importance associated with them; suffice it to mention that the fight for the democratic values is often perceived to exist only on the rhetorical level (Carmody, 2011, 55; Midford & de Soysa, 2010, 4, 27). Therefore, these confrontations would not necessarily reinforce each other when it comes to decision making.

Adhering to the cluster of economic development and reluctant cooperation discourses, on the other hand, could lead to policy makers taking a more cooperative stance towards the PRC if they indeed aim at developing the African continent. For the economic development discourse accentuates that the Western powers could learn from China's economic conduct on the continent and its directly beneficial results to Africans, while the reluctant cooperation discourse claims that China is able and, what is more, willing to learn from the Western states to improve its conduct in line with the international standards. These two discourses, therefore, point towards a cooperation whereby mutual learning between the West and the PRC is possible, desirable and beneficial for the African people. This cooperation need not necessarily happen out of philanthropic considerations; it can, for example, result from a security point of view against the spread of terrorism as well.

Therefore, we can say that the future courses of action resulting from the different discourses and clusters of discourses are multiple. The new scramble for Africa, as it is often termed, has not been decided yet. While the three discourses based on international relations theory could lead to confrontation between the traditional players and China in Africa, the economic development discourse especially points towards different policy decisions. This latter discourse is all the more important as it has been in upswing – while Mawdsley's results did not include a similar discourse or narrative trope, the economic development discourse in the present research has been a very important finding. The importance of the economic development discourse does not only lie in its significant share among the analysed articles, but is also underlined by its appearance in the relatively recent editorial. If policy makers would embrace a cooperative attitude towards China on the influence from the economic development discourse, the new scramble for Africa and heightened tensions between the United States and the United Kingdom on the one hand, and China, on the other, could be avoidable¹⁵.

Obviously, the course of action to be taken by the policy makers is highly influenced by their own perception that is not necessarily only influenced by the discourses present in the newspapers. These perceptions can be long-held and influenced by discourses outside of the mass media. To take just one example, as mentioned earlier, the economic development and reluctant cooperation discourses can help achieve cooperation to develop Africa but this cooperation can also come from security considerations. In this instance the security of the US and the UK can be perceived to be challenged by terrorism. Therefore, an appropriate measure against terrorism can be cooperation with China – who is also concerned about terrorism – to develop Africa to reduce the breeding ground of extremism. However, it is equally possible to perceive the Chinese growth and expansion as a security challenge. This perception would lead to a completely different course of appropriate actions to secure American and British economic and political interests in Africa or to try and stop the different Chinese value system influencing the African people. These security considerations could lead to confrontational policy. What matters is which security concern is the closest, the more imminent. If the terrorism threat is considered more important at present, it could see the US,

¹⁵ As mentioned in the methodology chapter, the researcher is biased towards an outcome that would see cooperation between the traditional players in Africa and China, combining China's effort and results in poverty reduction and the US and the UK's efforts to spread good governance. This outcome is connected to the cluster of the economic development and reluctant cooperation discourses; however, as the material shows, this cluster and these discourses are just one way the media understands the present topic and, as such, competes with the cluster of the other three discourses.

the UK and China cooperate, probably at the expense of the former two losing ground in Africa and the wider Third World (Klare, 2005, 29). If, however, the advocates of the China threat theory manage to convince the key decision makers that the China threat is more important than the terrorism threat, that could lead to a direct confrontation with China at the expense of neglecting the African people, pushing them towards alternative powers, such as terrorist organisations. Carmody states that the Africa Command in the Pentagon (AFRICOM) was not only set up by the US to combat terrorism but to secure natural resources and deal with the growing Chinese challenge (2011, 53).

The different discourses struggle to ascribe meaning and, therefore, meaning changes over time. The struggle pervades the social that is changeable as well. Meanings are subject to contestation, politics, and even the taken-for-granted meanings, the objectivity is not everlasting. Thus, it is important to be aware of the ongoing struggles and the prevailing objectivity of meanings and discourses if we want to overcome the different mobilisations, that the audience – be it the general public or the policy maker – are subjected to through the media, to take the best possible decision advancing international peace.

5.3. Further directions of inquiry

What remains to be said in the present thesis is a few words about the possible directions future analyses could take. It is evident that the scope of the present research could be widened in time as well as in the included media, newspapers or article genres. In this regard my analysis was very limited which could have led to different results than a more comprehensive study.

For reasons pointed out in the methodology chapter, the present research could not include more states and newspapers. Here I think about other states with former colonies in Africa, such as France or Portugal. It would be especially interesting to compare the discourses in the American and European newspapers on the one hand, and in Chinese on the other, on the same topic. Such a comparative research could enlighten the differences and similarities between how these states view the PRC's conduct in Africa and could possibly highlight how these discourses could interact with each other. Furthermore, including discourses from Africa in the research would add to the insight and would also emphasise the agency of the African

people, becoming, as such, part of the cluster of discourses that places significance on African agency.

Even though it was possible to speculate on the disappearance of the reluctant cooperation discourse as a result of antagonism with the influential and well-established liberal internationalist discourse, I could not embark on a study that takes into consideration the changes in discourses over time. A longitudinal study would be perfect for such a task.

Apart from the questions relating to widening or altering the scope of the research in different directions, at least one important question remains: to examine the interaction between discourses in the analysed media, the policy decisions on the ground, and possibly other discourses that are not present in the media but could still influence decision making. In this context what would be of particular interest would be how the struggles, antagonism, hegemony and objectivity observed in the media play out in the policy circles. Such an analysis would include a comparison between media and policy analysis and could, thus, possibly show how the media discourses are related to policy discourses, how the mass media create, transform and reinforce policy discourses and thus our political world.

Appendix – Empirical material

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